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H. E. BATES

A note on the English short story

THE history of the English short story is a melancholy one. Indeed it might be said that the English short story, before 1900 at least, has no history—for the simple reason that it never existed. It is true that certain nineteenth-century novelists, Dickens, Hardy and Mrs. Gaskell, for example, wrote what were termed short stories, but which were in reality nothing more than a potted extract of novel—or in other words, novels in miniature. The English nineteenth-century novel being what it was, a discursive, exhaustive, and often tedious thing, these short stories were also discursive, exhaustive and in the case of Dickens, so tedious that nine out of ten readers never trouble to finish those short stories which he sandwiched in, for some obscure reason, between the chapters of his novels. For the English nineteenth-century novelist the short story was a kind of orphan literary slavey—very useful for cleaning up the odd scraps of ideas which were too good to be thrown away yet not good enough to be the subjects of novels. So that the true short-story writer, the artistic teller of tales, was unknown though it is possible that he existed in the guise of essayist. It is

interesting to note that at this time Turgenev was writing *A Sportsman's Sketches*, Tolstoy such masterly short stories as *Family Happiness*, Mérimée such forerunners of the modern surprise story as *Mateo Falcone*, and Poe his masterpieces of imagination and pathological horror.

This famine in short stories continued in England down to the end of the nineteenth century. The short story, when it was considered at all, was a thing to be held in unspoken, if not spoken, contempt. The novel was large, therefore it was great; the short story was small, therefore it was insignificant. But meanwhile Turgenev had been succeeded by Tchegov, Mérimée by Maupassant, Poe by Ambrose Bierce—three writers who, more than all others, were to influence and enrich the short story with vitality and beauty. In England, Dickens had been succeeded by Arnold Bennett, who made the astounding confession that it was Turgenev who had taught him to write, and Hardy by Galsworthy, in whose work the influences of Turgenev was so obvious that he did not need to make the confession that Bennett had done. These men wrote short stories. H. G. Wells, Conrad, George Moore also wrote short stories. But all these writers were regarded primarily as novelists and only secondarily as short-story writers, and though the contempt for the short story had lessened, it still remained.

This was the state of the short story at the end of the Great War. It is interesting to recall that we were promised, then, a poetical and dramatic renaissance. A great epoch of national sacrifice and suffering, we were assured, had always been followed by an epoch of poetical fervour: the young men would pour out their songs: the flame of drama, fed by blood, would burn richly. Unfortunately for these expectations, a great many young poets could not sing because they were dead, and a great many young dramatists

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had acted in a comedy so realistic that their own plots seemed insipid and pointless beside it. The poetical renaissance hardly materialised. But when a new generation of poets sprang up a most unexpected renaissance did take place. It was the renaissance of the short story.

It was an unexpected event, though a most natural one, for the short story more than any other form was the perfect outlet for the creative energy of any poet who had been born in a world of bitterness and blood and yet had life before him. The young poet of another and less troubled generation had sung his lyrics. But the poets' voices of the post-War generation had broken early, and though they had songs to sing, they had not the voices with which to sing them. How were they to express themselves? They wanted a medium through which they could express both their joy and disillusionment, both their criticism of life and their delight in it. The short story was the only medium in literature that would satisfy their need. More than that, it was the perfect medium, and the post-War short-story writer made the discovery that Tchekhov and Maupassant had made before him, that the short story was the most flexible of all prose forms, that it could be anything from a prose-poem without a plot or character to an analysis of the most complex human emotions, that it could deal with any subject under the sun, from the death of a horse to a young girl's first love affair, and for the first time in English literature the short-story became something more than a novel in miniature.

But curiously the old indifference, the old lack of public taste for the short story, remained. People still took back to their lending libraries volumes of short stories, unread, which they had mistakenly borrowed as novels. Publishers still held up their hands in commercial horror at the suggested publication of a volume of tales. The editor who printed a

story of literary value was rarer than such a short story itself had been fifty years before.

Today that indifference for the short story has vanished. Ten years ago the existence in England of a daily newspaper publishing a short story each morning would have been a miracle. Today there are ten newspapers offering a short story each day to a public that has at last grown tired of serials it never read. The policy of the newspapers seems to me a significant one. It would not surprise me indeed if the novel, during the next ten years, lost its position of popularity to the short story. There could be no more refreshing literary revolution.

Welcome to a Rival

The success of *Lovat Dickson's Magazine* has emboldened a group of writers to launch a new venture. NEW STORIES, the first issue of which will, we understand, appear on February 1st, is to be a bi-monthly journal of the short story published at eighteenpence a copy and ten shillings a year, post free, from 118 Banbury Road, Oxford. The editorial board numbers several contributors to *Lovat Dickson's Magazine*—H. E. Bates, Arthur Calder-Marshall, and Edward J. O'Brien, to whom are added Hamish Miles, associate editor of *Life and Letters*, L. A. Pavey, and Geoffrey West. The policy of NEW STORIES will be to publish the best short stories obtainable, and especially such as are not readily acceptable to the stencilled type of popular magazine.

GEORGE MANNING-SANDERS

Where the tree falleth

Two unmarried fishermen, Nat and Henry Treen, lived with their aged mother in a cottage on a cliff. Mrs. Betty Treen was very infirm, her sight was almost gone and she could only hobble about with the help of two crutch-like sticks which her youngest son Nat had cut from the hedge. The cottage, and a few acres of rough cliff ground, had been bought for Betty by the vicar of the parish with the moneys collected after her husband, Joseph, was found in the surf marvellously entangled in one of his own nets. The boys were infants then. Betty had taken the charity with gratitude and she had reared her sons with scrupulous care, as if it were a public duty to tyrannise over them, and now when the sons were both beyond forty years of age they were still afraid of their almost blind, and almost helpless old mother. If they kept back any of the money they earned, it was done with as much sly care as if her brain were still vigorous and active ; if they spent time in the public house, they invented elaborate excuses to hide the fact.

One evening, the two men were coming up over the steep cliff path toward their home. As they reached the top of the cliff, each man spat, and put a clove in his mouth so that their mother might not suspect that they had been

drinking beer. Their clothes were ragged and badly mended. Nat was clean-shaven, the expression on his haggard face was almost wistful. Henry the elder, was proud of a long straggling moustache, and his expression was generally one of good humour—of superior good humour, as if he had the right to be amused because he could so easily detect the stupidity of others. Nat chewing vigorously on his clove, swung the string of fish he was carrying from his right to his left hand, and looking toward their home said: "Hullo, hullo, there's no smoke rising, boy."

Henry also looked towards the chimneys of the distant cottage, pulled his tattered cap forward to shield his eyes from the setting sun, and said with the air of one who utters an undeniable truth: "When fire is most hot there's least smoke—you did ought to know that by this time."

"That's all right enough," cried Nat, "but when have you ever come back home along this path afore, without seeing a rare welter of smoke rising from out that chimney? Answer me that!"

"I won't do any such thing," said Henry; "just because you've chanced to take a pint more beer than you can carry, you begin to shout this and that without sense nor reason. For another thing, you'd best pass your sleeve across your mouth to fetch away the froth from the corners of it, or mother will be at you like a ferret."

"I can look after my own mouth, if it comes to that," said Nat sullenly, at once passing the sleeve of his faded blue jumper over his lips. "You may be a better man than me at some things—that I'll own, and concertina playing is one, but I've got my points too, if it comes to that, as mother herself has said many a time."

The two weary brothers trudged along the path towards their home, quarrelling as they went. They had been on the

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sea all that day, and their catch of fish was so small that they were carrying it up for their supper—five little flat fish and two red bream.

As they drew nearer to the cottage Nat gripped his brother by the arm and holding out the fish with the other hand he said in a hushed voice: "Now who's got the rights of it? There's no smoke and there's no heat rising from that chimney."

Henry smiled pityingly. "Mother, she's seen us drawing near with the fish and she's put the pan on the hot coals, all ready; and it's that is holding back the heat from wasting up into the air."

The two men hurried past all the curious oddments such as fishermen usually collect about their homes. Pieces of wreckage found on the sands, broken crab pots, broken oars, and even litter that had been cherished since those far off days when their father went to earn his daily bread upon the seas. The blue door of the cottage was standing open. The hearth was cold. There was no familiar, bent figure in the kitchen, and no high-pitched voice demanding news of the day's work.

"Mother is up over stairs asleep—a touch of that old colic I wouldn't wonder a bit," said Henry cheerfully.

Nat answered in a voice of stern disapproval. "Who was right?" He went to the stairs and called softly.

There was no answer. They went up, Nat leading. The two bedrooms were empty. The little room where potatoes were stored was empty. The two men came down noisily. "She shouldn't have been left for so long—one of us should have bided home with her in turns," said Nat almost crying.

"She's slipped out to gossip with a neighbour, that's all," said Henry.

"Aye, she'd slip a brave way on her two sticks wouldn't she? Much you know or care how far she's crawled to die."

At that terrible word the satisfied smile left Henry's face and his languid moustache seemed to contract. "Die," he whispered, "mother wouldn't do that!"

They searched through the untidy sheds near the house, disturbing mouldy sacks that hung against the walls, as if in their agitation they suspected that their mother might be miraculously flattened there. It was getting dusk when Nat, looking at the ground, said accusingly: "A nice one you to search for a mother—why couldn't you have used your eyes, to see the marks of her sticks in the damp clay? There they go across to the furze stack. I'll be bound she's squatted there to rest for a bit, and dropped off to sleep."

The furze stack was in an untidy corner at the meeting of two hedges, where the brothers kept the furze they cut in the autumn from the cliffs. It was there they found their mother, face down, with her apron full of the kindling, a great bramble, as strong as barbed wire, twined maliciously about her ankle, and the two sticks lying crossed in front of her.

Nat began to blubber. "A thorn, eh? Tripped her up—my God, a bitter useless thing like that to finish off such a grand life! Why there's no fairness about it that I can see."

"Raise her up—she may only have come over fainty, like she did that time when you came home with the fish hook deep in your hand."

"Fainty—why she's so cold as stone, she's dead that's what she is, boy, and I wish now we'd sold the little fishes down to cove, because she was dearly fond of such and they would stick in my throat and that's a fact."

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Nat carried the two crutch-like sticks with his left hand, and supported his dead mother with his right hand on one side ; Henry supported her with both his hands on the other side, and they took her into the kitchen and put her tenderly in the cushioned armchair where she had been accustomed to sit.

Henry lighted the oil lamp and pulled down the blinds. Nat straightened the few strands of greenish-grey hair that had dropped over the dead woman's wax-like face.

"How she stares," whispered Henry; "put out your finger, boy, and draw the lids down over her eyes."

"I'll do no such thing, and there's too much of 'do this' and 'do that,'" said Nat, flecks of froth appearing at the corners of his lips; "that's how mother's died and that's how she'll be buried. I'll have no tampering with her face, and mind that."

"You're overgone with leariness the same that I am," said Henry pacifically. "I'll kindle up a bit of a fire, and when we've had a bite, we'll go out to speak with vicar, and he'll put us in the way of what's to be done."

The two men busied themselves at the cooking of the fish. When a spurt of flame shot up from the fire, a red flush passed over the face of the dead woman so that it seemed to her two sons as if she had moved her head slightly to get a better view of what was going on, or to give a quick nod of approval, whenever Henry adroitly turned a fish in the sizzling fat.

Before Nat sat at the table, he arranged his mother's hands on the arms of the chair, and placed the two crutch-like sticks behind her, so that she sat as she often did when her sons came home late and she had taken her tea before them. Henry ate plentifully, but Nat pushed aside his full plate, and drank huge draughts of strong tea. "If only she could

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be turned to wax, so that she could bide there just like she is now—that would be the thing,” he said.

Henry shook his head. “It will have to be done all proper, and a pretty fine expense it will be too, what with this and that. I’ve heard tell that old Mrs. Jackson cost her folk thirty pound afore she was settled comfortable under earth. It’s a waste of money, but there it is.”

“What’s to make it so much?” said Nat beating on the table with his teacup. He was hysterical, he hardly knew what he was doing.

“Why, women to lay her out, and the coffin of polished wood with brass knick-knacks, and vicar’s pay, and sexton’s pay and mourning suits, and food in plenty for them that join the procession, and all manner of little odds and ends. But we needn’t mind that so much, there’s hard on twenty pound saved away in the tin box.”

Nat brought his cup down on the table, and cracked it in half. “Mother did hate vicar, it would make her rise up from her coffin to hear the like of him mouthing over her. And do you mind how particular she was about strangers handling her? Those years ago when she was stricken in the lungs, she’d much as ever give the doctor a civil word; and as for that snub-nosed nurse from the village, she dared the woman to set hand upon her—and she didn’t either. Her arms and hands were white then, Henry—like milk, eh. And nothing in the wide world was too good for me and you.”

Both men began to cry without restraint. Nat noisily, and as if a real pain gripped him, Henry convulsively and silently. Presently Henry, wiping his red face with the back of his hand, rose and said: “Aye well, we’d best go and see to the burying, I s’pose.”

Nat flung out his arms, his lips were shaking, his voice broken and uncertain. “Burying!” he repeated.

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"Aye, there's no other way with the dead," said Henry, who secretly felt proud of his composure.

"I can't bear to think of it," shouted Nat in a passionate wail; "it's cruel, and if she had voice to speak, you'd never dare to do it."

"We can't keep a dead body sitting in the chair for ever." Henry rose, sighing profoundly, but evidently rather excited at the prospect of going across to the village with the news of his mother's death. But before he could move from the table, Nat put out a hand and pulled him forcibly down into his chair again. "Why shouldn't you and me bury her just as she is now—in all her clouts and on her own land that she did love so much?"

Henry's mouth gaped wide open to disclose the rows of his darkened and jagged teeth. "It's against the law, boy," he whispered.

"What's the law to do with it—no one need know."

"There would be folk calling to see mother, and what shall we say to them at all?"

"That she's abed, and won't see a soul; and we could make fast the door when we went forth to sea."

"But the service—the words of parson that belong to be spoke when one passes from life to be put down in the earth?"

"There's Marty Oat, the cobbler. Mother often went to hear Marty speak of a Sunday evening, up to chapel, he'd be thankful to do it, if we gave him a fish or two in payment."

"It's risky boy—that's what I'm thinking. For suppose Sergeant got wind of it? Though, of course, I'll not deny that it would be cheaper. For one thing we should be spared having to feast all them that would traipse to the church burying. There's scripture for it too, about a tree lying where it falls or something, eh?"

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"It would be nice to put her in exactly where the sly bramble tripped her up, and just as she is, with the rings on her fingers and the gold droppers in her ears."

Henry got up. He wanted to do something at once.

"What say we go to ask Marty Oak if he'll do so much for us, then?"

Nat was staring at his dead mother. "It won't do, and and I'll tell you for why," he said slowly; "as well let all the cove know at once and have done, for Marty might blab on us up to chapel. We'll put mother under the earth first, and then we'll get Marty to do it without telling him a thing. Yes, we will coax him to come across, and we'll stand him over her grave; and we'll turn our talk upon the scriptures and such like, and of a sudden we'll have a fancy to hear him speak off the burial words."

Henry began to roll up his sleeves. "Mind—it will be all right if nothing goes amiss; but if we're found out, everyone will be pointing a finger at us. We can't say day on day for years that mother is sick."

"No, after a time we'll give out that she's taken queer in the head, and we'll put a red shawl, or a hat maybe, over against the edge of the cliff; and then it will seem as if she'd got light in the wits and fell down into the sea."

"Come on then, and if the stars hold bright we'll need no lanthorn."

So the two brothers began to dig and shovel the stony earth to make a grave, just where their mother had fallen. They worked very determinedly, Nat with a pick, Henry with a shovel. The thudding and scraping of the earth and their grunts were the only sounds to be heard, except the beat of the sea, and the occasional howl of dogs on some far away farm. A great mound of earth gradually arose at the side of the shallow pit, and it seemed, to the superstitious men,

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that as quickly as they threw up the earth more came from a mysterious source to fill the pit again.

Said Henry, panting : " Reckon it will do now, boy."

" No fear," answered Nat, " it's got to be proper and deep."

At dawn they had finished, and only a very slight roundness on the ground, covered by loose pieces of gorse twigs, and a pile of earth thrown on the far side of the hedge, betrayed their labour. They did not go to sea on the next day. Their limbs were aching, and their nerves were at such a high tension that even small, accustomed sound seemed to have in them a new, and supernatural significance.

After they had eaten breakfast, Henry said sullenly : " Well, we're in for it now and there's no backing out, so we'd best get on with the job. What say we make fast the door and step over to Marty Oat and bring him back along with us—I can't bear to think of mother lying down there with no sort of Christian burial."

" I was just thinking the same," said Nat dully.,

So they carefully fastened the windows and the door of the cottage, and set off for the hamlet where Marty Oat the cobbler, lived. They found the little man hard at work in his shed, singing a hymn as he beat at a dilapidated shoe. He was hunchbacked, pale-faced and fanatical looking. The two brothers shook his hard, dirty hand and Henry, who had agreed to be spokesman, said : " It's a fine day, Marty, and me and Nat wondered if you'd care to come over along with us to—to, well, spend a few hours holiday."

" Eh ! " cried Marty, " what for ? "

" Why nothing in particular that I know by, except that we did think it would do you good to come away from your tapping for a bit."

Marty glared from brother to brother in open suspicion.

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"Is it to see your old mother ; is she failing, and does she want me to read a few comforting scripture words to her ? Because that would make a difference. I might come for duty, but I'd not come for pleasury."

"Mother is in no need of such," said Nat hastily ; "only it's me and Henry that do have a longing to hear you talk a bit."

"Ah—then there's no need for me to traipse so far, you can shove the oddments off that bench and sit yourselves, and I'll talk, off and on, as I work."

"Won't do at all," said Henry, "for folk might be coming in, and that would shame us. Grown-up men don't like to be caught harkening to scripture high by day."

Marty dropped the shoe and the hammer. "Do you mean for to say that you two men have come to crave me to save your souls alive ?" he demanded, his pale face brightening joyfully.

"We want you to come with us so that we may hear you read and talk scripture," said Nat doggedly.

The little cobbler was pulling his apron off over his head. "I'll come to once," he said excitedly, "for this may be the beginning of what I've always hoped for—the time when I shall be known as the greatest saver of souls in the county. You two are not exactly bad, though all know that you don't bend your necks to the yoke of God's praise. Take me anywhere you have a mind to and if I can't convert you this day, I'll be at you till I do. I can't say fairer than that."

As they all three were going across the short cut over fields the brothers kept their sullen eyes on the ground, and the cobbler, almost skipping, talked boastfully of his ability to defeat the devil with one hand tied behind his back. Mounting a stile ahead of his companions, the little man pointed accusingly and said : "Hullo, so you are having

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a bit of a party, eh, and that's why you did coax me to come."

Henry, with great presence of mind, looked toward the people gathered around the distant cottage and said: "Its no party at all as far as we know by, but maybe it's mother is taken with sudden illness," and so saying, he began to run.

A woman stood out from the group and said to Henry: "My days, what's come to your mother at all? I saw you and Nat go off across the fields, and so I come over to have a word with Betty. But everything was locked up, so I shouted and clattered thinking that she might have bolted herself in, and come to harm. My man, he was ploughing in a field, I ran for him, and we burst the door down expecting to find her in a heap on the floor; but if you'll believe me, the cottage was as empty of her as the palm of my hand. Where's she gone to at all?"

"She's never done the like before," said the agitated Henry, "I'll be bound she's set off for a walk along the cliff."

"You mustn't take on about it, because she's an old woman, and we can't be first and last both, Henry, but I wouldn't say that she hasn't fallen into some place; for there's no sign or sound of her along the cliff, or anywhere else, and we've all been searching for the last hour."

Nat came up. "Mother's not nowhere to be seen," said Henry to him.

"Well, I never," said Nat dully.

The cobbler, Marty Oat, came up, perspiration dripping from his long nose. "It's fortunate that this has come about on a nice day," he said.

The sergeant of police came on a bicycle. He pulled his sandy moustaches, and looking at the scattered searchers on the cliff, hinted that if he had been sent for earlier, he could have organized the search. "That kind of thing is

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no use," he said waving a hand contemptuously toward the two sons, who were poking about near the wood stack. "Those two gawks of men do think they're seeking blackberries, instead of a fully grown old woman."

All day the searchers dawdled upon the cliffs, peering into crannies and small places where hardly a dog could have hidden. At night, when the willing helpers had gone, Nat and Henry were left alone in their cottage. Henry lighted the oil lamp and pulled the curtains over the window; Nat sat hunched in his chair miserably. "Now," whispered Henry, "here's a fine mess you've made of it! Trying to shove a Christian woman under earth like a dog. If we're found out we stand a chance of being transported over this job. And I saw Sergeant looking at you very sharp more than once. What's to be done upon it?"

"Done!" said Nat sullenly, "why get into our boat and push out to sea and never come back no more—that's the best from what I can make of it."

"If we do the like, Sergeant will only go nosing about to dig mother up; then they'll cry out that it was foul play, and they'll carry us to Bodmin to fit our innocent necks with rope halters."

"It's a bad job, and I wish we'd had nothing to do with it—and that's straight," said Nat.

"Well, what say we heave her out again?"

"And own up?"

"No fear, bring her into the cottage first, and then spread the news that she've found her way home."

"But—but folks will see that she's earthy, and she will be as dead as a nail."

"No matter for that, they'll think she took and died while we ran into the village."

"Doctor, he would know better, and he'd tell Crowner,

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and Crowner would plague us with questions. No, we must think on something better than that."

Nat paced up and down the small kitchen. Henry sat at the table staring vacantly at his boots. The china clock on the mantelpiece ticked remorselessly and mockingly, as if deriding the two men's helplessness. "If only mother was here now, she'd soon have the rights of it," said Nat; "she'd not be flummoxed."

"There's always a way out of a thing if one can think a bit clear," said Henry. "Suppose we dig a small pit, lay her there, and give out that she fell spraddling into it."

Nat paused in his agitated striding. "Well then, why not unbury her, and bear her down over cliff to some ledge, then it would look as if she'd toppled over and there'd be no questions about the earth and that."

"That's the way of it," said Henry spitting on his hands, "and the sooner it's done the better."

So again the two men laboured by starlight to raise the body of their mother from the earth. Then, making the ground level and covering the loose soil with twigs of bracken and furze, they lifted the corpse, and with infinite tenderness carried it to a ledge half down the cliff and laid it there.

"We should have a witness to the finding by rights," said the panting Nat, when they stood at the top; "or we might so well have taken her to the cottage, first as last."

"To be sure," said Henry. "You go over to the cottage for ropes and a crowbar, and I'll run to arouse Marty Oat—he's one that won't see more than he's told to see."

Soon Marty stood with the brothers peering down over the cliff. "Yes," he said excitedly, "I wouldn't say that you're not right—it do look more like a human being than anything else."

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"And here's where she skittered," said Nat, making a groove in the soil with the iron heel of his boot.

"I did think that I looked over here only this morning," said Marty.

The body was brought to the top of the cliff. Marty holding a lanthorn forward said: "How earthy she has got to be sure."

The three men carried the awkward weight between them to the cottage, and then Nat said: "She did ought to be cleaned up a bit afore the neighbours see her, for mother was always fussy and natty in her ways."

"And there'll be a Crowner's court over her," said Marty with unction; "and I'll be able to quote a bit of scripture. It won't do for either of you boys to wash her. I'll run for my missus."

Henry was licking a stump of pencil and writing with difficulty on a scrap of paper. "And after that, you might go over to the village and tell those whose names I've writ down to come across," he said.

Marty took the scrap of paper, and hurried joyously on his errand. And soon his limping wife came bustling in with an apron under her arm. The corpse was washed, straightened and laid out in a bedroom, and all trace of earth had been removed from the cottage, before the sun arose behind the distant church tower.

"Who is that coming this way?" said Nat wearily, pointing toward the village.

"That's carpenter to take mother's measure," said Henry.

"And who's that hastening to overtake him?"

"Sexton, to ask about the grave."

"There's other folk just getting over the stile."

"Aye—it's Sergeant to question us, and Mr. Sampson to take our measure for black clothes; mother will have a

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inquest and a Christian burial with all the parish following, and she deserves it if ever mortal woman did."

"Never a truer word spoke," said Nat fervently, "and as for that old Marty Oat, he's nothing more nor less than a quack parson, and we'll not invite him to the burying—he's smallish, but he's got a great appetite."

Henry nodded. "He wanted us to lay mother to rest in the piece of ground beside the chapel, most like he'd pocket some of the money."

Nat frowned. "No fear—we won't have mother put so near the dust of the road; beside there's only one or two buried there as yet. We'll have her laid snug in the churchyard with all them others for company."

"Aye, without stint."

"A marble headstone she shall have, with a bit of a hymn writ in black and goldy letters."

The two sons then advanced with solemn steps, to satisfy the curiosity of the approaching villagers.

HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON

Three in a Row

MISS ETHEL marched ahead carrying the candle, and so cupping it with her hand that the light fell full on her round, horn-rimmed spectacles, making these look like gigantic eyes.

"I'm sorry, girls," said she, throwing open a door, "this is the best I can do for you—every other room's full. But I know you won't mind turning in together. May's such a shrimp that you can put her between you and never know she's there."

Dutifully the three who followed at her heels chorused: "Oh, not at all." "We shall manage." "Very good of you to have us, Miss Ethel," as instructed by their respective Mammās.

But once the door had shut on their hostess they gathered round the bed—a narrow half-tester—in which they were expected to lie three in a row; and let their real feelings out.

"The old toad! Playing us such a scurvy trick!"

"On such a hot night, too!"

"And when she wrote she'd have plenty of room!"

"It's those Waugh girls from Bendigo that've done it. *Their* father's a judge! But anything's good enough for us."

THREE IN A ROW

"I wish I hadn't come," piped Patty, the youngest, a short, fat girl of eleven.

"Oh, you!—with your bulk you're safe for the lion's share. But what did the old hag mean by her cheek about me?" snapped May, who had come to the age of desiring roundnesses. "A shrimp indeed!"

"Don't know, I'm sure," said thirteen-year-old Tetta not quite truthfully. (May's was just a case of the "girls from Bendigo" over again.) Tetta was getting rid of her clothes at top speed, peeling off her stockings, leaving one here, one there, her combinations on the floor where they fell. Then, holding her nightdress like a sail above her, she shot her arms into the sleeves and was ready for bed, while Patty was still conscientiously twisting a toothbrush round her gums, and May had got no further than loosening the buttons of her frock.

"Tetta!—you haven't done your teeth . . . or anything."

"Don't want to. And I'm giving my teeth a rest. A dentist told someone I know it wore teeth out if you were always brushing them," gave back Tetta easily.

The "Lazy liar!" this evoked was cut through by her shrill: "Oh, lord, girls, *feathers*!" as she stooped to examine the build of the bed. A further discovery, however, Tetta kept to herself. This was that the bed had a distinct slope, out from the centre and down at the sides—she tried each in turn. And having let a few seconds elapse, for fear the others had noticed her wriggings, she said mildly: "Look here, Mabs, if you like I'll take the middle. I don't mind being a bit crushed."

"Oh, no, you don't!" retorted May suspiciously, suspending her hairbrush. "I know what it means, my dear . . . when you're so willing to oblige." May was ratty with herself for being behindhand—even that stupid Pat had

raced her. But to go to bed *properly* meant almost as much work as getting up in the morning.

"Well, for goodness' sake, put some biff into it. The mean bit of candle she's given us won't last for ever."

"No, I promised my mother to brush my hair twenty times, every night and morning, and I'm not going to break my word for anyone," said May dourly, and pounded away with upraised arm. At which young Patty, who in her efforts to come in second had rather scamped the prescribed "folding" of her clothes, suffered a pang of conscience, and turned back to refold them. But Tetta thought: though she brushed it a hundred times it would never be anything but bristly. Yes, that was just what it was like—the bristles in a brush.

Now she and Pat lay stretched out, a sheet drawn over them, a hump of feathers between. Oh, it was a shabby pretence at a "double"—why, there was really hardly room for two. And when at last May came to join them—she had gargled her throat and cleaned her nails . . . just as if she was going to a party—the rumpus began.

For Tetta said: "Blow out the candle first." This stood on the dressing-table, and it would have fallen to her, who lay on that side, to rise and extinguish it. May, the goose, doing as she was told, had then to climb over and in between them, in the dark. There was a moment of wild confusion: dozens of legs, a whole army of them, seemed to be trampling and kicking in an attempt to sort themselves out. Tetta had taken a grip of the head-curtain, and so kept her balance, but Patty, unprepared, found nothing to hold on to, on the bare side of the bed, and, as May finally and determinedly squeezed herself in, she slid to the floor with a cry and a thump.

"You pig!" from Tetta. "You did that on purpose."

THREE IN A ROW

"Well, what next, I wonder! . . . after you two had taken all the room. Anyhow, now you'll just have to get up and make a light again."

Grumblingly Tetta swung out her feet and groped her unknown way. "Now where has that table gone to? Oh, *damn!*" For, coming suddenly and unexpectedly upon it, her elbow caught the candlestick and sent this flying. There was a crash; and the candle could be heard rolling over the bare boards.

"Now you've done it, you clumsy ass! Ten to one old Ethel'll come pouncing in on us."

"If I get a bit of china in my foot it'll be me who pounces." Tetta was on her knees, cautiously fumbling for the matches. These found and one struck, the candle was recovered; but the candlestick lay in fragments.

"Spill some grease on the floor and stick the candle to it," suggested May.

With some difficulty Tetta contrived this hold, clutching her nightgown to her out of reach of the flame. Then she crossed to the other side of the bed to see to Patty, who still lay where she had fallen, snivelling over a bruised arm and a hefty bump on the forehead.

As there was no butter handy, Tetta poured water into the basin, soaked a sponge and held it to the wounded place, to keep it from swelling—and over this the floor got rather wet and messy, for the half-burnt, guttering candle, some three inches high, shed its meagre circlet of light only on the opposite half of the room—then prodded the bruised arm to try for a broken bone. Patty was *quite* sure she had.

"Nonsense, Pat, it's only been your funny-bone," and Tetta rose to her feet.

But the sight of May sprawling meanwhile at her ease

in the centre of the bed was too much for her. "It's all your greedy fault, pushing and shoving like that so that *you* can lie on your back. Well, you can't! There's only one way to lie and that's spoons—on our same sides. Now then, Pat!"

But Pat whimpered, if she had to sleep on the outside she'd never sleep at all; she'd always be expecting the whole night to fall out again. She'd rather lie on the floor.

"Well, why not? That's quite a good idea," struck in May brightly. "Then we should all have room."

"I wouldn't, Pat," said Tetta emphatically, with another glance at May's luxurious recumbency. "At least not if you don't want tarantulas crawling over you in the night . . . and perhaps centipedes, too. There's sure to be squads about this dirty old house."

Before she finished speaking Patty had leapt on to the bed, her bare feet drawn up out of danger's way.

"Now then, Mabs milady, shunt! You've just *got* to let her in the middle. Are you ready?"—and with the same breath Tetta puffed out the candle and sprang to secure what little space was left.

With due care they arranged themselves, back fitted to front, and for a few moments, tightly wedged as they were, it seemed as if there might be peace.

Then May said: "My mother always says it's dangerous to go to sleep on your left-hand side. It makes your heart swell up. And you could die in the night."

There was a faint squeal from Patty. "Here, let me . . . I'm going to——" and the bed rocked under her determined efforts to turn to her right.

"Well, if she does, we've all got to. *Are* you ready?" sighed Tetta once more.

Gingerly and in unison they heaved.

THREE IN A ROW

But: "Tetta, you've taken every bit of sheet!" from May.

"I haven't!"

"You have!" And the sheet, reduced to a rope, was tugged violently to and fro. "If you think I'm going to lie with my back all bare . . . It's bad enough to have it hanging out over the edge."

"The answer to that is, you shouldn't have such a big behind!"

"It's not! I haven't!" cried May, justly indignant. "It's not a scrap bigger than your own. Now if you had Pat's running into you, you *might* talk! Hers is simply enormous; it reaches right down to my legs."

"Oh, it *doesn't*!" wailed Patty, on the verge of tears again. "It's *not* true. It's *not* enormous!"

"Oh, shut it, you blubberer! What's it matter if it is?" snapped Tetta, losing patience. "And anyhow, the Turks admire them." But the Turks were heathens, and Patty was not consoled. She lay chewing over her injuries, to which another was now added. "It's no good . . . I simply can't. . . . I'm suffocating," she said in a weak voice. "My head's right down in the crack between the pillows. I haven't *any* of my own."

"Here, take half mine," said Tetta, and shoved it towards her. May, who liked a pillow to herself, gave hers a hasty pull, which overshot the mark. Down and out it slid, she, attempting a rescue, after it. "Ooh! I'm standing in water. The whole floor's swimming."

Said Tetta when order was once more restored: "The only thing to do'll be to hold on. Here, Pat, you put your arm over me and round my stomach, and May hers round you. That's it."

In her case it answered. But May, seeking an extra firm

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grip, was unlucky enough to let her fingers stray on Patty's front, and this was too much for the fat girl, who was wildly ticklish. She began to squirm, and the more May tried to hold her fast, the more she wriggled, screwing herself up, defending her middle with arms and elbows, fighting with her knees, all to the accompaniment of a shrill and unconquerable giggle.

The result was that May and Tetta again found themselves standing one on each side of the bed.

"You'll have to take the fool round her bally neck."

"Well, then I shall probably strangle her in her sleep," said May darkly, as she climbed in again.

They linked themselves anew, and once more there was a brief spell of drowsy silence.

But it was, oh, such a hot night, and before long, out of the heat and the darkness, May's voice was heard in a distracted: "But Pat! . . . you're all wet."

"I'm not, oh, I'm *not*!" tragically protested the one thus accused. Called abruptly back from a half slumber, her mind in its confusion had jumped to the day of infant peccadilloes.

"Idiot! I didn't mean that. But we're simply sticking together like melting jellies."

"And, oh, I do want a drink so awfully badly! I think I'll die soon if I don't have one," moaned Patty.

"That comes of being so fat. Fetch her one, Mabs," ordered Tetta, stifling the girlish equivalent of an oath, as she applied yet another match to the stub of candle.

But May tilted the jug in vain. "I believe . . . yes, you *have*! . . . you've used up every drop. Well, Tetta Riley, if you don't deserve to come to want some day!"

"There couldn't have been more than a cupful to start with. I suppose the tank's going dry. Besides, who cleaned

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their teeth, I'd like to know? Well, Pat, there's nothing else for it, you'll have to suck the sponge."

And this Patty did, to the encouraging remark from Tetta that it was only her own dirt she was eating.

But the problem of sleep had become a very real one. And the night seemed to grow hotter with every minute that passed.

Here Tetta had a new idea: they should try one of them lying crossways at the foot. Yes . . . that was all very well . . . but which? And over this there ensued a wordy dispute. Patty was too fat; she'd stick out too much . . . besides being so hot to put your feet against. Tetta, on the other hand, or so she argued, was too tall: "My head'd hang over one side, my legs the other." No, it must be May or no one, and sourly and unwillingly the victim dragged herself to the bottom of the bed and lay athwart it. But she couldn't possibly sleep without a pillow . . . what was she to do for a pillow?

"Why, make a bundle of your clothes and ram them under your head."

"My clothes? That I've got to wear to-morrow? All crumpled and creased? Think I see myself!"

"Oh, very well, then, take mine! Thank the Lord I'm not such a darned old fad as you." And by the last flicker of the dying candle, Tetta darted round the room, redeeming her scattered undergarments, her skirt, her petticoat . . . and not omitting her prickly suspenders.

"There. Now turn over so that you face the foot."

"No, I mustn't do that. It'd mean lying on my left side."

"What tommyrot! Not if you put your blinking head the other way round!" cried Tetta in exasperation.

But this May could not be got to see; or else she would not see it; and, by now, both dog-tired and half-silly for

want of sleep, they barked and bit their way through what gradually deteriorated into a kind of geometrical wrangle, and ended by Tetta snarling: "It's easy to see *you've* never done any Euclid!"

This was a spiteful thrust; for May had failed at close of term to get her remove, and so to reach a class in which she, too, would have been held capable of writing *Quod erat demonstrandum*. And ordinarily, for decency's sake, you did not allude to her misfortune. But to-night bonds were loosed.

After this a silence fell . . . but not the silence of peace. May, galled to the quick, lay revolving a means of revenge.

Presently to ejaculate: "Oh, Tetta . . . oh, your feet! . . . take them away . . . oh, *pub!*"

"What the . . . what in the name of Christmas do you mean by that? When I've had two baths to-day!"

"Then all I can say is, your *shoes* must be high!"

In answer to this, involuntarily but very fiercely, the libelled foot shot out in a straight kick. It landed on May's nose—the soft and gristly part that is so tender. With a scream May sat up and clapped her hands to it, and now, thoroughly hurt and unnerved, fell to sobbing: "Oh, my nose, my nose! You've broken it, you beast—you dirty beast! It's bleeding . . . I can feel the blood dripping from it."

Yet another of the precious matches went in verifying this. True enough, a few drops of blood *were* oozing, and the upper lip had had a nasty jab against the top teeth. Once more the sponge was requisitioned, and its last remaining moisture squeezed from it.

In compensation for her injuries May now demanded to be allowed to occupy Tetta's place at the head of the bed.

"Wait. First I'm going to find out what the time is.

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We seem to have been here for years. It must surely be nearly morning now"; and with this Tetta opened the door and crept on tiptoe into the passage, where a clock hung.

Returning, she said hoarsely and dramatically: "Look here, you two, it's not even half-past twelve yet! There's still six blooming hours before we can get up . . . can possibly get up. And the candle's done, and there's no more water, and only two matches left. I'm fed up to the neck. . . . I can't stick it a minute longer. I'm going out."

"Going out? What do you mean?"

"Where to? What for?"

"What do you think? On the verandah, of course. To get cool. This room's as hot as . . . yes, as hot as *hell* . . . when you come back into it."

"Tetta Riley! . . . your language! If only my mother could hear you!"

"Oh, bing, bang and bung your mother! I'm sick of the very sound of her."

"I'll tell her every word you've said."

"Oh, go to—to Sunday School!"

"I do. And I will. And I'll tell them, too. And you can just *get* out on your old verandah, and stop there. It'll be jolly good riddance to bad rubbish."

"I'm going. But you're coming, too. Think I mean to leave you two snoring here while I kick my heels outside? Oh, no, my dears, not me! Up you get—and double-quick! Both of you."

And meekly, without a further word, the two so commanded obeyed. For when Tetta, the easy-going, spoke like this—in what was known as her "strong-minded" voice—they were her humblest servants. Nor did they resent her mastery. Patty, the sheep, invariably trotted tail-down after her elders;

but May, for all her spirit, was at heart Tetta's devoted crony ; and as a rule each made a friendly allowance for the other's failings : a slommicky laziness on the one hand, an ultra-prim exactitude on the other.

Now, at Tetta's direction, skirts were slipped over night-dresses, jackets buttoned on top. And turning their backs on the hideously crumpled battlefield of the bed, they spread a blanket on the verandah's edge, laid pillows and bolster on this, and stretched themselves out, three in a row, with a sheet atop of them.

Oh ! the relief it was, to escape from those fondly clinging feathers, those steep, sloping sides. Hard the boards might be, as hard as your own bones, but they were at least dead level. Besides that, you were free from the heat of your neighbour's body, and could toss and turn as you chose.

The sweetness, too, of the summer-night air, after the shut-upness of the stuffy room ! Pat, who had staggered tipsily in her companions' wake, drew but a couple of full breaths and was fast asleep. May, correctly arranged on her right side, took longer : privately she thought what they were doing was not quite *nice*, and wondered what her mother would say when told of it.

But Tetta lay wakeful. For one thing, it was so light. Not from the moon, for there wasn't any ; it was the stars that did it. The sky was as thick with stars as . . . well, she who lived on the sea-board had never seen anything like this bush sky : it was just as if someone had taken diamonds by the handful—no, the bucketful—and flung them out without caring—hundreds and thousands of diamonds, all hard and white and glittering, with hardly an inch of space between, and what there was, gone a pale dove-grey.

“ Oh, gosh, what tons ! I never knew there *were* so many stars, did you ? ”

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But there was no reply. So she just lay there, with her hands clasped under her neck, and stared up at the sky till her eyes smarted. And then something else came into her head—a familiar thought, and one she often amused herself with. It had to do with her own identity. Did there, she was given to wondering, somewhere or anywhere on earth, exist a replica of herself? Was there, hidden away in some corner of the globe, another girl called Tetta Riley, thirteen years old, with a stub nose with freckles on it and all her other little funniosities, who had grown up as she grew up, and who felt and thought like her? Herself, finding it hard to believe in her own uniqueness, she was inclined to think there might, there must be; and when, as now, she had nothing better to do, she would send her mind round the world in a fanciful search after her second self. To-night, in face of this starry splendour, she let it stray to what she believed to be “other worlds” as well, chasing her thoughts among the stars and planets and the Milky Way, leaping from star to star . . . over gaps of palest grey . . . till her head spun, her eyes dazzled; and sleep, descending, gathered her too into the fold.

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On the Sabbath

THE three Gurney sons stood in the doorway of the little thatched cottage that was their home.

"Nay," growled Joe, the youngest, "I b'ain't a goin' with 'ee over theyurr—t' see them gurrlls!"

But his brothers mocked him; they stood either side of him, looking at him, half-smiling, taunting.

"Ah," said the eldest, "then bez 'ee afeared o' gurrlls, Joe?" Joe Gurney went hot; a flush sprang up his body, mounted into his face.

"Afeared!" he snapped. "I isn't, but I's got a bettur way of spendin' my day than suppin' cidurr with them blinkin' females—ach!"

And he spat. Then, blundering away from his brothers, he set off down the cobbled path, walking fast, swinging his arms, as though intent on reaching some particular place.

But when he came to the edge of the high cliff, out of sight of his home, he stopped suddenly and sat down on a patch of grass between two clumps of flowering heath. For he didn't know where to go.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Joe was sixteen. . . .

Drawing up his knees he clasped his hands round his legs and stared down between his thighs at the fork of his cor-

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duroy trousers, without seeing them. "Them gurrlls," he muttered to himself, and it was at the daughters of the neighbouring farmer he was looking.

He saw one in the act of crossing her legs as she sat on the sand with her back against a rock; as she parted her bare brown knees a gust of wind caught her white linen skirt, and lifted it. In the moment when her knees fell away from one another, Joe caught sight of a clean stretch of thigh, bare flesh, paler than the tan of the girl's knees and skins, and very clean.

His elder brother, drinking from the spout of a cider bottle, had looked at her and laughed; the girl had laughed, wickedly, Joe thought, and the two had risen together and walked off, his brother with his arm round the girl's narrow waist. That was last Sunday. "Them gurrlls . . . !"

Below him, immediately below, over one hundred feet down, the sea gurgled in a deep pool, closeted between two huge rocks grey with barnacles. The languorous sea rolled in and rolled in on mounting, pregnant waves that never broke, for the water ran into the rock-trap on each wave's heaving rise, was caught there, gurgled deeply, ominously, then sank back with a low thunderous swirl, conquered—to gurgle once more before at last admitting its failure to overcome the solid fortress of rock.

Joe sat watching. Mute, with his lips drawn into a line that sagged a little at each end, he stared down at the ebbing tide. With one hand he pulled at the grass between his thighs, tugged a handful, threw it away, tugged again—with short, sudden, stabbing movements of his wrist and hand. He let his eyes wander out, beyond the rocks, to sea. The sun blazed down on the flat expanse, and the surface shimmered back at him, like a shining silver quilt of gigantic size, so that he had to screw up his eyes to see it. From afar it

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came surging in, in sinister silence, till at last it approached the rocks with a low growl, as a lion might, before pouncing on its prey. He raised his head and looked up, but the sky was the same, colourless, filled with the sun's glare. It gave him a sharp pain behind his eyes, so he closed them, opening them anew to find the horizon, but the sea and the sky were one, married at an invisible line. Only a stagnant blurr of cloud, smoke from some ship beyond that line, marred the total absence of all things save the sea and the sky, and pointed to the neighbourhood of that line where the human eye says they meet.

Silence hung heavily on the air, still as the smoke-cloud over the sea; nothing but the swirl and the gurgle of the water below made sound. And Joe went on pulling at the grass, till within reach there remained no more to pull; while, from time to time, he kept muttering to himself: "Them gurrls . . . them bleedin' females . . . starin', flirtin' 'ussies, I'd like to. . . ." But exactly what he'd like to do with them, or to them, he was not altogether sure.

Uppermost in his mind, and strong in his body, was the desire to handle them, handle them roughly. "Treat 'em rough!" he growled, and he wondered that the words sounded so huge in the silence; they seemed magnified, to echo and to mean even more than he meant them to mean, so that for an instant he himself grew larger and stronger, the girls smaller; he was attacking them, rolling them over in the heath, and they were laughing hysterically, half in admiration, half in fear, but making very little resistance to his flat-hand smacks on their bare thighs; "treatin' 'em rough, the kiss-and-cuddle wantin' 'ussies. . . . I'd like to. . . .!" There was a cruel look in Joe Gurney's eyes.

As he flung away the last few blades of grass, a shadow flashed in front of him across the brim of the cliff. He

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glanced up. A gull, gleaming white, swooped down as if from nowhere, wings motionless ; then, seeing Joe move, it lifted the tip of one wing, rose like a silent rocket, and sped on. He reached out for something to throw ; that was his immediate impulse ; his eyes were hard and set. He looked quickly round him. A stone ? But there wasn't a stone ; there was nothing but grass and heath, and the gull was already almost out of sight. Balancing horizontal on the air he could just see it, a white fleck against the distant cliff-face, growing rapidly smaller, till at last it soared and was lost in the white distance of the sea and sky.

"Swine !" As before, Joe's voice sounded huge in his ears. He uttered the word viciously, feeling both the word and the tone of his voice were warranted. He told himself he was right to feel as he did towards the bird. It *was* maddening ; the great evil beast, he said to himself, with its vicious food-seeking eyes and the carrion crook of its beak, flying off like that, sweeping effortlessly over the earth, un-touchable . . . and he not able to raise himself more than a foot from the ground . . . mocking him, just as he felt the eyes of "them gurrles" mocking as they sat back with his brothers, eyeing him sideways, taking him in, sizing him up, aware of his years—on Sunday afternoons, when there was nothing to do. . . .

With a grunt, Joe Gurney got to his feet. Raising his arms and clutching the back of his shirt between his shoulders, he pulled the garment over his head and stuffed it under a furze bush. He stood naked to the waist, his body tanned and hairless. Then, shielding his mouth with one hand, he faced the sea and uttered a long, loud shriek. The cry, wild and haunting, not unlike the magnified scream of a gull, pierced the silence with such clear unexpected sharpness that Joe himself felt momentarily startled. It shocked him ; it

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was a shock to realise he was capable of making such a noise, break thus so great a silence with the power of something so small as his own throat ; but he was shocked even more when the one distant echo of his cry had died away, and, looking round, found there was no living thing in sight that might have heard and taken notice of his haunting yell. The thought made him feel very much alone. He gazed down again at the gurgling water a hundred feet below him, then shrugged his shoulders and started off along the narrow sheep path that led eastwards for miles above the precipice of black cliffs.

Below him was sheer cliff ; but still lower down sharp, jagged rocks jutted out from the face of it, hung menacingly above the water or joined the smoother sea-worn and barnacled mass that was clear of the surface, even at full tide.

There were no houses, not even a sign of human life so far as the eye could see ; yet sheep and the one-time wandering coast-guards had worn a thin pathway round the brink, frighteningly high above the sea. The path was so narrow that he had to walk by placing one foot immediately in front of the other, for only a few inches to his right was the precipice, while on his left, the hill—covered with mossy down-grass, occasionally dappled rocks thrusting through the green clumps of sea-pinks, white convolvulus, fern, scabious and sweet-smelling crow's foot—this hill rose at a sharp angle from the very edge of the path, and towered above him, silhouetted dark against the colourless sky.

In places the path ran so near to the edge that he would stop to unearth a large stone from the bank, drop it where it stood, and listen to it crashing as it ricocheted from one rock to another in its headlong flight down to the water. And when at last it plunged into the depths and the hollow resounding boom, echoed from the rocks below, rose up to

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him, he felt a wild thrill race through his body and head at the sound, making him feel somehow that digging up a stone and hurling it into the sea were admirable acts not easy to perform. That booming echo, like some prehistoric monster's roar. . . . !

The sun shone hot on his back as he walked ; he could feel the heat burning the rounds of his shoulders, smarting on his skin, tanning him a deeper brown. But soon the warmth and the heavy stillness of the afternoon began to fill him with a restless lassitude ; his legs began to weary under him, the will to walk the five miles to the lighthouse was there, but his body lacked the effort to obey ; his head was heavy, his eyes drowsy, and the interest to move any further fell from him and left him lax. Yet he didn't want to sleep ; he was restless. He sat down ; stared out to sea ; gave himself up. Why walk ? What for ? The lighthouse was not really an objective ; he knew it well ; he knew he did not really want to go there. Yet, what was there to *do*—on Sunday afternoon ? His brothers—they were drinking cider now, sitting in the sandy cover near the village, with " them gurrils." Let them ; it didn't interest him. He never queried this, it never occurred to him this was the only thought that constantly did interest him. He assured himself that he was not and would not be " that kind of man " ; girls didn't interest him, he'd rather have the sea, watch the sea plunging against the rocks and the birds that his mother said he " doted on " ; he'd rather lay the pots, he said, for lobster and crab ; even work on the land, be alone with himself—anything rather than be stared at by, and drink cider with, " them gurrils." Hadn't his mother always said : " Jose, 'ee bez a law unto 'izself, 'ee be ! " And he had told himself this so often that now he looked upon it as a recognised fact ; he was *different* ; he believed it, not thinking,

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yet never ceasing to think, in spite of himself, of his brothers in connection with "them gurrils."

Just then, with his feet dangling perilously over the edge of the cliff, he saw something move on a rock that was a little island over which the rising waves just failed to break. The object was small and black: it moved again, very suddenly, and he saw it was the small pointed head of a cormorant. He got up, the better to see it, and on tip-toe he could just make out its long, thin neck. The bird stood alone on the far side of the rock, a foot above the rise and fall of the sea. Joe wondered if he could reach it with a stone; again it was his first impulse on seeing it, to heave a stone at it, to make it move; he wanted to see it fly, he told himself, but actually he could at that moment have experienced no greater joy than to have hit it clean and simply on the head so that it fell, with a plop, into the water, dead. Yet, if someone had asked him: Do you want to kill that bird? he would have been greatly indignant. Good God, no—he'd have said—whatever for, I only want to see it move!

By climbing up the slope a little, he could now see the whole of the cormorant. He decided it was watching for fish: swift as a dart it kept turning its head first this way, then that: standing up very straight, its long neck outstretched, black, all alone, on the one little island rock, it was the only living thing in sight, this single lonely bird. Thinking of this, the bird became in Joe's eyes all the more desirable a target. He bent down and loosened a large stone half-buried in the grass by his feet. He pulled it out, a large flat stone that fitted perfectly into his fist. With this in his hand he felt immediately a strange power. It was a weapon, strengthening him; and he stood, there exulting in the complete possession of the thing, as solid sporting English-

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men stand with their guns, waiting for the air to fill with the pheasants they themselves have reared.

Joe toyed with his stone for a moment, enjoying to the full the sensual pleasure of holding it tight in his fingers, drawing up his right arm so that the biceps bulged and the veins stood out big on the pale inside of his forearm. Then he leaned back with a smile, aimed, and flung it far out over the cliff, with the strength of his entire body. He watched the stone soar, curve, and come down with a sharp crack on a rock not so far out as that on which the cormorant was perched. As the stone landed, Joe heard several cries come from under the cliff immediately beneath him, and a flock of gulls flew out, whirling wildly round in astonishment; but the cormorant merely spun its head, looked back once, then continued its lonely vigil, unperturbed.

Joe stood watching, surprised by the sudden appearance of the gulls; then, concluding they must be nesting on the cliff-face, he returned his attention to the cormorant. It angered him that he had failed to "move" it; the cool defiance of so small, insignificant a creature riled him, deprived him in an instant of that strange power he was aware of when possessing the stone in his fist. He bent down again and looked about for another. Finding one, the strength in him returned, and with it a cruel, vengeful glare came into his eyes.

The gulls still careered about wildly over the face of the cliff, crying: Quark—quark—quark, cli, cli, cli, and rising suddenly and swiftly at each movement made by Joe, soaring high without effort, turning on the imperceptible drop or lift of a wing-tip, to glide away motionless and in silence, only to return again on a rise of the orange hooked beak, dive like a falling star, then soar once more with one flap of the grey wings, and sail overhead, showing the snow-white of their bellies to the man whom they mocked: Cli, cli,

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cli—quaaaark ! knowing that standing there he was powerless to harm them.

Joe watched each one, admiring and hating, infuriated by the monotony of their cry, envious of their flying-power, jealous of their life—he watched, with his fingers clenched tight round the stone. As each bird sailed over him, close, within reach, the muscles in his hand ran taut to clutch tighter the stone, and he was aware that even this movement was not concealed from the gulls, for at the very quickening of his sinews the birds appeared to flash on speed and were away before he had time to raise his hand. He knew their little eyes saw everything and their cruel beaks missed nothing that was food.

Once more he leaned back, aimed, and flung his stone at the cormorant. This time it landed with a plop in the water, beyond the little island rock. The bird twitched its head, stared, and took no further notice. Gulls flew out again from the hidden cliff-face, raising a hundred wild cries, making out to sea, then turning, circling, swooping, some falling, and with a flutter of wings landing gracefully on some rock far down at the sea's level, others coming back fearlessly to their nests beneath where Joe stood.

At his second failure to "move" the cormorant, his anger and desire rose in him afresh. He came down again to the narrow path, sat on it, and worked his way by inches on to the brink, till his legs dangled over the edge. From here he leaned his head over till he could see a few gulls sitting flat on the jutting edges of rock. Some rose and flew out at sight of him, screaming, leaving bare the brown speckled eggs on the roughly-made nests. He remembered then his father forbidding him as a child ever to climb over the cliff-face, threatening him, warning him of its danger. And he remembered the day his brothers had defied this warning

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and succeeded in stealing two gull's eggs, "blowing" them afterwards in their bedroom at night. He had watched them fascinated, yet thinking with disgust, as his mother had taught him to think, how they had robbed the female gull of her children and two young gulls of life. Then he thought of the cormorant; his brothers had always lusted after an egg of this bird, but they had never found one. Long since they had passed on their egg collection to him, but Joe, while accepting it, did so with little grace, saying that robbing birds' nests didn't interest him, that it was a cruel, silly pastime: ask their mother. "I'se can betturr use my time," he had added.

But now, looking at the single defiant bird, sitting heedless of him on the rock, his desire grew. Had it laid there? The moment the thought entered his head he knew that he must know, that he would not rest till he knew.

He looked down between his legs, over the cliff. Height had never turned Joe Gurney's head, he had never learned what dizziness is, and he was no physical coward when it came to rock-climbing. But he judged that to attempt to lower himself from where he sat was madness. Immediately under him the ground caved in, retreated several feet, then advanced again, in a series of ledges, like steps, and on almost every ledge a gull sat, or a nest was laid. No, from where he was it was impossible to reach the safety of those ledges. He looked eastward up the cliff and thought he saw a patch of sloping rock from which he might reach the ledges without too much risk of falling. Walking towards it he glanced at the island rock; the cormorant was still there, twitching its head backwards and forwards, intent on its own business. As Joe started to lower himself down the slope on his hands and back, the gulls beneath him took flight again, screaming madly. He stopped to watch them,

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half-lying on the incline of rock ; he made an effort at counting them but they flew and swooped and changed places with each other in the air with such speed that he soon gave up the attempt. It seemed that the nearer he came to their nests the more fearless they grew. Some rose over him and swooped horribly, frighteningly near ; so close that he could hear the wind flashing through the small feathers in their wings and see the cruel little eyes warning him, defying him, and their curved beaks that sent a tremor of fear running through his body. He winced involuntarily when they swooped over him like that ; they looked so huge and powerful, and so close ; from wing-tip to wing-tip their shadow shut out the sun in passing and for an instant he knew he was in the full shade of their flying bodies, lying on his back. He knew he was powerless, should they attack. The thought angered him, forced a rabid hate into him. Yes, he must hate, he told himself, to convince himself he was on the side of the gods and that his actions were blameless. After all, he didn't want to hurt the gulls, he only wished to know had that cormorant laid over there on the island rock, and how else was he to find out ? But should they attack, well. . . . Anyway, look at the advantage they had over him—they could *fly* !

Watching, his admiration of their effortless flight, the balanced and motionless wing-spread carrying them racing through the air, never wavered, but it increased his envy, his jealousy of them, and his hate.

He raised himself and descended the rock-face foot by foot on his back ; then, turning over, he lowered himself over a steeper part of the rock on his front, grazing his chest at intervals, while he gripped with his fingers and groped for foothole with the toes of his rubber shoes, half-blindly, since the cliff-face fell too sheer for him to see anything below his knees.

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As he approached the nesting ledges the cries of the gulls, now one incessant shriek, rang madly in his ears ; their numbers had increased ; hearing the commotion others had joined them, flying from other breeding grounds along the coast, out of curiosity, full of their everlasting search for food. They circled round the boy in hundreds, screaming : Quark—quark—quark, cli, cli, cli, till he imagined the whole countryside must hear and come racing to know what it was that was causing the silence of Sunday afternoon to be shattered by such a noise.

By the time he reached the ledges, the sun had fallen low in the sky, coming golden in its setting over the sea that was magnificently calm, turning the water from silver to slate in the distance, and beneath him from slate to a pale gold. The white of the flying gulls' wings glowed in the light and their beaks shone like little daggers of fire as they opened them to scream, hurtling round the boy who was now half-way down the cliff-face, in amongst their nesting ground.

Strong as he was the climb and his perilous position on the precipice were beginning to tell on Joe's nerves and legs. All the way down he had not found a single foothole large enough to allow him to stand and rest awhile. The muscles in the calves of his legs ached and there was a crick in the back of his neck from constantly having to bend his head low to seek foot-room. It was with infinite relief that he stepped on to the top ledge and was able at last to stand still on both feet, keeping himself steady with one hand on the cliff above his head. At his feet two nests were laid, one with two brown speckled eggs, the other empty. Close by he saw some grey fluffy thing move in a crevice of rock, and he looked again. He shifted his position and saw the point of a beak, dark grey, peeping out—a gull chick, hiding. He stared down at it with mixed feelings ; at first he wanted to

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pick it up and fondle it, but a moment later the desire to grab it and fling it from him possessed him strangely. In a curious way he feared the little helpless thing, a kind of superstitious fear. He bent down as far as he was able and peered into the dark crevice. The chick sat hunched up in a corner, half-concealed, cowering, as far into the rock as it could worm its little body. It sat there facing him, frankly terrified, emitting a long sharp trilling noise of terror from its open beak. Joe remained staring at it, hearing the wild screaming behind and above him and the whistle of the wind racing through the wings of the gulls as they flew round within a few feet of his head. He half-turned to see them, when at that moment a gull swooped. He saw it coming, falling, as it sped down straight towards him, its neck outstretched, beak wide open, eyes wide with anger. He lifted his arm with a jerk to defend himself; one of his feet slipped with the effort; his heart leapt inside him; his throat went dry, and he could feel the blood fading from his face. Clinging desperately with his fingers, he shut his eyes and saved himself, hearing the tearing scream loud in his ear. He guessed how close the bird must have been, for he felt the wind from its rush fan his bare back as it skimmed over him in its furious flight. He steadied himself and took a deep breath, and once the first fear subsided, anger welled up in its place, his body revolting at the humiliation of having been afraid of a bird.

The chick still trilled in the crevice, infuriating him. He felt no pity for it now, only anger and a strong desire to destroy, a resentment of its weakness, and a resentment, too, of his own cowardice to destroy, the old superstition running deep in men, the fear of "I will repay." He wanted to frighten it out of its wits, to kill it with shock if he could, but lay his hands on it, his *bare* hands, kill its weakness with

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the power of his own superior physical strength, *murder* it thus, this he knew he could not do. And aware, acutely aware of this impotence, he became angered all the more. He bent down again to stare it full in the eyes, and as his face came nearer to the crevice the chick ceased its trilling, opened wide its beak and was promptly, disgustingly sick. The grey vomit sprang from its mouth and fell close to Joe's feet. Instinctively he recoiled, again loosing one foothold. Shocked in his own stomach, his throat contracted and he came near to retching, but the perverted pleasure he received from having frightened the bird into sickness thrilled him, and he breathed freely again, and steadied himself.

He turned and looked down ; the sea gurgled in a deep pool still far below ; long brown tongues of sea-weed were flowing to and fro in the green transparent water ; a fish darted and was gone. Beyond, a great black cloud loomed up from the horizon, darkening the sea, approaching, threatening. Behind him the sun had sunk over the hill and he could feel the evening chill on his naked back. He saw the cormorant still standing on the island rock, twitching its head. He must hurry ; it would soon be dark, and how he should re-climb the cliff-face to return had not occurred to him in his desire to reach the island rock. But now, faced with the prospect, quite suddenly it did. He retraced in his mind the sheer precipice he had just descended and trembled at the thought of having to climb back again over the same glassy face. Then he looked below him at the ledges, and confidence returned at the thought of how easy they would be to descend. Once down, he thought, once I get there I'll get back somehow all right. But I must hurry.

It was simple work lowering himself over the ledges : grasping one with both hands he let himself down on his knees to the next, raised one leg to where the other knee was,

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stood there on one foot, then lowered the other leg. It was easy enough. The gulls still flew round him, crying, sometimes too near for his peace of mind. Once there was a crackling sound as he dropped his foot on to a ledge he could not see, and when he came in sight of it he saw that he had smashed an egg : the half-formed chick was a red and yellow mess in the nest ; the oozing blood was trickling thick over the stone, down. . . . His stomach heaved for a moment as he was forced to pass his face over it on his descent. The gulls seemed to scream more wildly. . . .

The ledges ended more abruptly than he thought. No, there was still another, but it was far down, fully eight feet of flat vertical cliff, over which to lower himself. He stood, with one foot on the narrow ledge, and contemplated the difficulty. One thing was certain, he perceived : once down he could never return the same way ; he could never hope to reach up the eight feet to the ledge on which he stood ; that was certain. But the fact didn't greatly trouble him ; he was far more intent on overcoming the difficulty of getting there, and from there further, than he was of thinking of his return journey. He stared down at the one remaining ledge. At last he made up his mind there was only one solution : he would have to drop the extra space separating it from his feet while hanging at full length. The possible consequence of this risk did not enter his head ; he was a good climber and he was nerveless ; he had never fallen, never so much as maimed himself on a rock : why should he now ?

No sooner had he decided on this course than he began to lower himself, trusting his weight entirely to the strength of his arms and the grip his fingers had on the ledge. He let himself down by inches, till he hung in the air, from his hands. He gripped with his fingers till the veins stood out on his arms, and his finger nails went white on the ledge

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from the strain put upon them ; he drew himself up with the power of his biceps, to assure himself of his strength, his body flat against the rock-face, then lowered himself to full-length, stretched from fingers to feet.

Even in such a position, when he discovered he had not reckoned with the length of his arms—so that his toes now dangled within a foot of the last ledge—his self-confidence was such that he gave a laugh of glee, and dropped, throwing all the weight of his body against the cliff. He landed on both feet, his face and body flat with the rock-face, his arms at his side, and balanced there, still. Drawing in a long breath he let it out again in a sigh of satisfaction and relief, for he was tired and the strain had been more than he had expected to reckon with.

The ledge was just large enough and the cliff caved in sufficiently where he stood, to allow him to turn round. He did so, and stood facing the sea, his arms stretched out behind him, palms against the cliff. Then, lowering his eyes, he suddenly gasped and went white, in abject horror. All at once he felt his bowels turn loose inside him, his entrails writhe, and the water in his bladder flowed quick to the brim. For there, beyond him, was nothing but the open sea, the gulls crossing and re-crossing before him, while below—immediately under him—there was nothing but fifty feet of space, then a mass of sharp barnacled rock and the ominous gurgle of the sea. . . .

He was cut off !

In one blind flash he knew that if he fell he would hurtle to certain death on the rocks, and he knew that even if he were able to spring from his position on the face he could not hope to fall in the sea. Leaning over so far as he dared to see what there was immediately below the ledge on which he was standing, he shrank back, for there was nothing.

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With a rush of terror he realised the dreadful fact : he was standing on the point of an overhanging crag from which it was impossible either to ascend or descend.

He was trapped !

Realising to the full his position he began to tremble. His hand shook on the rock-face. His hand had never shaken before. It terrified him that he saw it shaking now, against his will. He looked at the fingers splayed against the stone : they were trembling violently. By clenching them with all his force he tried to stop them trembling. But he failed, for his fist trembled in their stead. He looked at his other hand : it also trembled. Then he placed them side by side and they shook together. Staring wide-eyed at them he realised with the blood rushing from his face and the loose pain in his bowels growing every minute more acute, that for the first time in his life he was mortally afraid. Irrelevant thoughts raced through his mind, half-obeying his will, for he dared not allow himself to think. The gull-chick. He felt a wild pity for it now. It had vomited from fear—of him. The poor, miserable little thing, the cowardly beast he had been. Never again, never—if only he could see some chance of getting out of this . . . if only . . . his mother was sitting in the silent living-room, knitting, knitting . . . click, click, click, went her needles. She was knitting ; it was dark evening ; his brothers were out. Then the chair was empty ; his mother was gone ; the clock ticking on the mantel broke the silence. “Mother ! Mother !” God in Heaven, would he never see his mother sit here again ? But with a gigantic effort he pulled himself together. “Joe Gurney,” he said aloud, “you’re a man, stop trembling !”

Again he caught sight of his hands, but they unnerved him and he looked away, down at his feet. Lifting one, he saw with renewed horror that it shook the same as his hands,

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violently. He let it fall back on the ledge and immediately his knees began to beat against the rock-face. The spittle dried up in his mouth, his tongue lay against his dry teeth, like leather on stone. Aware that the horror of his plight was increasing with his thoughts and affecting him physically, he shut his eyes, but the moment they were closed he felt himself swaying, and, aghast, he opened them again and flung out one arm to hug the rock to him, as though the stone were the body of a woman. At the same time he uttered a despairing cry and burst into tears. But at once fear quelled them and he began to scream. Help! Help! His fear grew with his crying.

He leaned against the face of the cliff, with his head up, his eyes staring and watery, crying wildly, helplessly, in despair: "Help! Help!" But only the gulls answered his frantic calls: Quark, quark, cli, cli, cli, cli! They wheeled over and above him, closer now, screaming, as though fully aware of the man's impending doom. Joe, shivering, stared at them with a terrible envy, those *wings*. . . . Flat on the air they sailed, poised, motionless, heedless of the earth, held in mid-air, over the deathly rocks, on the power of a few feathers and thin bones, an expanse of grey and white wing, a little thing, more powerful than the human frame. His glassy, terror-stricken eyes stared at them hopelessly, watery with self-pity, silently crying out to them in his utter helplessness. But they only flew over his shivering body, raced close to his face so that he could feel the wind from their wings, crying their everlasting cry—Food—Food—Food! while he stood there, his limbs shaking, his teeth chattering, with horror.

It was dark now, and cold. A wind had sprung up and the huge black cloud hung menacingly overhead, darker than night. Joe felt a heavy spot of rain fall on his chest, cold,

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sending an icy shiver through his body. Then another, and another. The cloud had broken. The wind fled through his hair. A flash of lightning ripped the sky, rushing fork-like into the sea. In the one brief white moment the rocks and the sea below were revealed to him in a light more clear than day, and he felt his strained nerves fail him suddenly; his muscles faltered in his legs. The immediate weakness terrified him afresh; how much longer would he be able to stand? They must be hunting for him now; he was four miles from home; how long would they take, how long? *Were* they looking for him? Why should they? He had often gone out on Sunday afternoon and come home late. Had he? No, surely not! Yes, yes, he had. He could not get away from it, he knew he had. They were *not* looking for him. Oh God! Oh God! Shivering, with rain running down his face and naked chest, he mumbled a prayer, with fearful fervour, praying to some God he had known at his mother's knee. At that moment a distant church bell came through to him on the wind. "God—God—God!" it tolled. Then he began to scream, "Mother! Mother!" But he could hear the increasing wind throw back the words at him. His strength was going! his arms against the cliff ached abominably and his legs felt numb, not part of himself any more. Another streak of lightning flashed out, wildly cutting the sky, then shot down into the sea. His empty stomach heaved, making him awfully aware of his complete emptiness. With effort he managed to turn his back on the rain and lean his head against the cliff-face, trying to summon his remaining strength. The rain beat against his back, ran down inside his trousers, down his legs, till he was drenched and the cold water froze his limbs. Clenching his fists he began to scream again; he called into the wind the name of his mother, his brothers, one after the other, in terrible

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despair. At each cry he choked and retched, the grinding pain cutting through his body, from his chest into his empty stomach, forcing it to double up. But each time he recovered just enough to keep his balance, lean against the cliff, and cry out again.

At last, in a hollow, failing voice, he called the names of the girls he had refused to go and see with his brothers only that afternoon. He raised his head and called them into the night, his chin on the cliff, his arms stretched wide, fingers splayed. And his brothers' words came back to him, mocking him. "Ah, then bez 'ee afeard o' gurrils, Joe? Bez 'ee afeard . . . ?"

And he screamed till the pain shook him: "I b'ain't afeard of 'ee—I love 'ee, I love 'ee. . . . I love 'ee, mother, I love 'ee!" Then, as the last words rose into a mad shriek, his head went dizzy, his body wavered, faintness possessed him, his face blanched yellow-white, his back bent outwards, knees gave way, his arms dropped from the cliff-face, and, in a heap, he fell.

It was the gulls found him, his chest pierced by one rib and his skull smashed, one leg bent the wrong way; and the gulls told his brothers, soon after dawn; and by then the rain had washed the body clean of its blood and the gulls of its flesh. And the brothers returned to their home, one with a pair of trousers, the other with a pair of shoes.

FRITIOF NILSSON

*Jacobson**

"For the lie of the liar turneth back in his throat and filleth it, until he is strangled and dies".

FOR many years, I lived by a lake that had as many islands as the year has days. In the summer, brown-skinned women in bright bathing-suits bathed by its shores. Most of them were visitors from far away, forming an agreeable circle of acquaintances, of the kind one hardly ever risked meeting again.

My nearest neighbour and inseparable friend was Peter Gädde, a man of private means. He was kind and fat, and enjoyed a sound sleep. He was, moreover, a practical man who saved an annual sum amounting to about one-eighth of his dividends, by himself manufacturing the soda-water for his whisky and soda on an apparatus attached to a carbon dioxide tube. My diligent association with Peter contributed to the maintenance of this proportion between savings and income. In times of prosperity it was sometimes rather difficult, but in periods of depression it was no trouble at all.

Peter was an enthusiastic angler and huntsman. He watched over the proper catching of pike and perch, and saw to it that the dogs were trained in good time against

* Translated from the Swedish by Paula Wiking.

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tender feet, and that everyone was routed out of bed at an ungodly time on the first duck-shooting day.

It was one summer in August, when the nights were turning dark again. Peter talked much of the long line for eels and whatever else the Lord saw fit to place on our hooks. He was planning a major expedition, and we were to stay away all the night. Peter made long and numerous preparations, especially with regard to the food hamper. For several days we spoke of long lines to the exclusion of everything else, and silenced all irrelevant conversation.

The day the long line was to be played, Peter and I put on our best clothes. Anna—Peter was married—asked wonderingly :

“ Getting all dressed up to go fishing ? ”

Peter, who was putting the finishing touches to the hamper, replied :

“ Can’t look like a pair of tramps when we’re going through the town ! We’ve got our fishing togs in the boat.”

Nothing more was said about the matter, so Peter and I went down to the boathouse, filled the petrol tank, and tried out the engine. Peter’s little daughter May and Peter’s chambermaid were to come down later with the hamper. They did so, and swung the heavy basket down to us from the pier.

May smiled a mocking, precocious smile and said :

“ Mummy’s seen the violets in the hamper ! ”

The chambermaid sniggered, and Peter’s face turned very red.

“ Oh, the violets ! Yes, of course,” Peter stammered. “ I bought them for mummy at the market this morning, and, in my hurry, I put them in the hamper by mistake. Will you take them back to your mother, May, like a good girl ? ”

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And Peter dived down into the hamper and dug up two resplendent bunches of violets, which he surrendered to May.

"Shall I take the two boxes of sweets, too?" May asked.

She got no answer to this question. The chambermaid choked with laughter. Peter bent over and pulled the starter once, and the engine started hacking; twice and three times, and the motor roared. Peter kicked the back gear, and the boat slid slowly out of the boat-house as May stood on the pier laughing gleefully and waving the violets in the air.

As soon as we were out of hearing and heading for the open water, Peter remarked:

"Damn it, I have to think of everything! We could have brought the hamper with us! *You* might have brought it!"

"You might have brought it yourself," I pointed out mildly.

"So I might. Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk," Peter replied as he took the wheel. "Give me some beer."

"It's not cold yet."

I had just felt the uppermost bottles in the freshly packed case, which was lined with ice.

"It's colder than I am," Peter retorted. "Toss me a half-pint!"

I obeyed.

At the rate of five knots we ran through the green bay and over blue waters towards our distant goal, a nameless island. Nameless, indeed. But an island where we knew that long lines could be laid with advantage, and that brown-skinned summer guests would welcome us joyfully. Long-line fishing must not be done at haphazard.

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After a several hours' voyage, we tied up the boat to a pine-tree that leaned over the shore-line of the nameless island. The brown-skinned ladies were down to meet us, and helped us with shouts of acclamation to unload our provisions.

In the dusk, we threw out our lines and began our watch as we waited for nibbles. On the veranda of the little cottage the table was laid; the food was good, and the drinks were well-tempered. The portable gramophone that we had brought with us played. Over our heads, Japanese lanterns glimmered, and beyond their circle of light the August night hung like a kindly concealing black curtain. The brown-skinned ones showed their white teeth, and their calves in shining silk stockings. But Peter was not himself, was not, as generally when far from hearth and home, the dashing and successful lady's man. Evil forebodings oppressed his soul—but enough, more than enough, of that night!

It was not till the evening of the next day that Peter and I put in at the boat-house. But we had a three-pound eel with us. Peter carried it home on a freshly-peeled willow switch. He was very silent, and did not even propose a whisky-and-soda before parting.

When I met Peter in the High Street next morning, he was a mere shadow of himself. He told me the tale of his sufferings. Anna had shown no mercy. In fact, she had been so sour that the milk in Peter's breakfast porridge had turned. She had asked him innumerable questions: what eel was worth per pound, whether it was characteristic of eels to take to a bait of violets in August, what kinds of fish were caught with confectionery, whether I was the only suitable companion in the town, and more of the same kind.

Since there was no one to whom I had to answer for my

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actions, I found it difficult to restrain my mirth, and the arm I put round Peter's shoulder was a treacherous support. I said :

"Have dinner with me to-day. We'll have crayfish."

The dullness of the little town oppressed me for the moment more than usual.

"Impossible," Peter returned. "You don't know what you're talking about. I shall have to be a tame cat for a long time to come."

"Then I'll have dinner with you."

"Still more impossible! I shouldn't ask my worst enemy to dine in a hornet's nest."

"Couldn't I try to fix it up somehow?"

"Couldn't you try to light a cigar in a powder-magazine?"

With these words Peter left me, and I continued up the street. I didn't *want* to eat dinner alone, but how should I detach Peter? Suddenly I remembered the silver bowl. I had it! And my astonished delight was so great that I stopped dead. So intensely was my joy reflected in my features that the brewery wagon approaching me did the same. The driver thought my joy was inspired by thirst and by our happy meeting.

Peter's silver bowl—it had a history of its own. It was a magnificent piece, signed by Drephal, of Karlskrona, 1723. The graceful handles, the shape of the bowl itself, the simplicity of its decorations—all bore the marks of distinguished craftsmanship. Peter had acquired it at an auction.

The evening before the auction Peter was out with some friends, men of finance, and the conversation ran something like this :

"If we get bolshevism, everything will go to the devil. If government bonds lose value, we might as well go straight

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to the poorhouse. If Breweries don't go up now, people ought to stop drinking beer. Gold is dust. When you're dead, you're dead." Peter became quite optimistic after all this talk. At the auction he bought the bowl for two thousand crowns in cash. His friends praised his good investment, and Peter bore the treasure home in triumph. But once home he stopped triumphing.

Anna figured out all she might have got for two thousand crowns. It was a good deal. Could Peter sell the bowl for two thousand crowns at once? Of course he could not. Why, it was a work of art. But when the right buyer came he would pay three, even four thousand crowns. Not likely!

Peter had that bowl crammed down his throat morning, noon and night. And silver is quite indigestible. Soon he could not complain about the least household expenditure without being serenaded with the following song, composed by May:

"When you're selling silver bowls,
Our Peterkin in money rolls,
But to buy a pin,
Peter's far too mean."

It was small comfort to Peter that the chambermaid dared not sing it to his face. She whistled it instead.

Peter would have been delighted to throw the silver bowl into the lake, if only he might have been spared hearing any more about it. But Anna decided that when the bowl was sold some day she would have a new fur coat for the money.

I telephoned Peter, and Anna answered. On discovering it was I, she lost her friendly and amiable tone. She was not impolite—merely freezing.

"I'd like to ask Peter to dinner to-day," I began.

"Impossible. Peter's not quite well to-day."

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"Could I talk to him for a minute?"

"It's not quite convenient just now."

"Well, strictly speaking, it doesn't matter so much to *me*. It's just that Jacobson's in town. I'm having dinner with him and I thought ——"

"Jacobson?"

"Yes, Jacobson. Haven't I ever told you about him? My friend, the eccentric banker. Known, by the way, as one of our foremost collectors of antique silver. Haven't you a bowl you want to sell?"

Anna became enthusiastic.

"What time do you eat?"

"Yes, but—I thought Peter wasn't well!"

"Never mind—he's coming."

"Wouldn't it be best in any case that I talked to him myself?"

"Not necessary. What time did you say?"

"Well, in that case—at seven. Sharp!"

"Seven o'clock. Trust me!"

Peter's humour was considerably improved as he entered the restaurant on the stroke of seven. He praised my inventiveness.

We ate a substantial dinner of crayfish, charr, chicken and fruit, and drank deep of multitudes of drinks.

With the coffee, Peter gave expression to certain apprehensions regarding Jacobson.

"It's very important, you know, that we should say the same thing when Anna asks about him. Otherwise we've just jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"If we equip Jacobson with certain conspicuous traits," I suggested, "it'll be easier for us to remember what we've said. For instance, we can give him a red beard. That's the sort of thing you remember."

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"O.K. for the red beard," Peter replied. "I'll tell you what, though. You have lunch with us to-morrow. I'll get up very early and go out for a walk for a few hours, and then I'll come along to fetch you. Then I shan't meet Anna till lunch, and you can take care of the details. All I've got to do is agree with you."

"But what about to-night?" I objected.

"To-night!" Peter exclaimed. "Why, damn it, man, what kind of a party is this, anyway? Do you think I'll be able to talk to-night?"

And he wasn't.

Next day, when Peter and I met Anna at the luncheon table, she was very curious about Jacobson. But Peter decreed that one couldn't talk with one's mouth full, and that she would have to contain herself till we got to the coffee. Still, I had to declare at once that Jacobson seemed very much interested in the silver bowl, but that unfortunately he had had to leave by the night train, but would return at a suitable time to look at the bowl. He had also asked to be informed before they decided to sell it to anyone else, I said. That sounded promising, Anna thought.

When we had stilled our hunger, and Anna was serving the coffee, she said:

"At last! Now tell me about him! Is he rich?"

"I'm not sure if he has seven million, but I know for a fact that he's got six," I assured her. "And, by the way, he's got a red beard."

"And what a beard!" Peter assisted me. "It looks like the burning bush under his chin."

"He's got a wooden leg," I continued.

Peter began to feel uneasy.

"Go out and play, May," he said. "You needn't sit indoors when the weather's so fine."

May disappeared and Peter took up a strategic position behind his better half to make me a warning grimace.

"Surely you don't mean," said Anna, "that he just has an ordinary wooden stump! I suppose it's a really good artificial leg."

Peter signalled to me behind her back. But I replied innocently:

"No, not at all. He's got an ordinary wooden leg, one of those sticks with a pad, and the trousers-leg hanging down empty over it. Jacobson's frightfully eccentric—you wouldn't believe it, Anna. I shouldn't be in the least surprised if one fine day he came round with a hand-organ on his back to buy that bowl. You never can tell beforehand what he's going to do."

Peter sweated. But there was no holding me now.

"It's painted in rustic style—the wooden leg, I mean."

"Good heavens!" Anna exclaimed.

Peter completely lost his head.

"He's got a glass eye," he burst out.

"Oh, yes, so he has," I said. "It's quite a nice-looking eye. Remember the time he dropped it in the soup tureen when he was taking it out to show us?"

"Yes—it's a wonder it didn't break," Peter replied weakly.

"He was very careful of it. I wanted to fish it up at once with the ladle, but he was afraid the ladle might injure the glass. So he drylaid the eye instead by eating up all the soup."

Anna had never heard of anything like it before.

"What a queer chap," she said. "But, of course, millionaires often are eccentric."

"And what a thirst he's got! You understand, Anna, that's why Peter was forced to drink rather a lot. If you

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want to do business, you know, you've got to make sacrifices."

"Don't speak of it! So long as he buys the bowl!"

For some time after that Anna often asked about Jacobson. At last I said he'd left for the Riviera, and wouldn't be back for a long time. By and by, she stopped asking.

The summer slipped into autumn, and the autumn to winter; spring came, and then it was summer once more. The story of Jacobson had almost faded from our memories.

One hot, steamy July day, I was visiting my friend Peter. We sat in the drawing-room, which the drawn blinds had plunged into a sort of half-light—it was cooler indoors than out. Through the open veranda doors, we had a view of the garden, its verdure drooping in the still, heat-trembling air.

As we were lolling most comfortably in our chairs, Anna came dashing in from the garden. She was greatly excited, threw off her straw hat and began to arrange her hair before the mirror.

"Jacobson's here," she said.

Neither Peter nor I were mentionably excited at this information.

"What Jacobson?" Peter asked lazily.

"The banker!" Anna exclaimed. "The one with the wooden leg. I'm sure he's come to buy the bowl. I was standing in the garden when suddenly he entered by the gate, and I ran in to get tidied up a bit. And just think! He had a hand-organ on his back, and he's got a red beard. I really thought you were exaggerating. But he *is* original! How do things look in here?"

Anna turned from the mirror and ran an appraising eye over the room. I stared at her as if she were a ghost.

Peter started to rise, but I held him back. Something

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had to be done. But what? I was horrified at our wild tale coming true.

"My dear Anna!" I cried in desperation. "For pity's sake, don't let Jacobson come in! Keep him out in the garden. You'll have to go through with the business as best you may. If Peter and I meet him, there'll be no end of carousing. I know him. And I can't stand it in this heat."

"Perhaps you're right," Anna replied. "What do you think, Peter? How much can I ask?"

Peter gazed blankly before him and never said a word.

Anna fetched the magnificent silver bowl from the dining-room. At the very moment she stepped out on the veranda we heard the first tones of the Merry Widow waltz from a hand-organ outside.

I could read in Peter's face that for a moment he thought of the two thousand crowns. But he was too utterly overwhelmed to take any active steps.

When the music ceased, Peter and I stole to the veranda door and peeped into the garden. And there, on the garden bench, under the sunshade, sat Jacobson, our lie, to the life. The red beard flamed like the burning bush under his chin. The wooden leg was painted, if not exactly in rustic style, still with a fair number of curlicues.

Once I awoke in a hotel room and found a man hanging from the cord of the damper, clad in my ulster. But seeing Jacobson this sultry July day was worse. Peter looked ill. We staggered back and sank down into our chairs. Not a word could we utter.

Anna's negotiations with Jacobson were not long, but apparently successful. She returned without the bowl, flushed and eager.

"I got two thousand five hundred," she said triumphantly.

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"Exactly what I asked. That's pretty good interest on the outlay. He was awfully queer. Hardly said a word. Just mumbled something about not having such a lot of money about him. And he didn't introduce himself either, for that matter. But I got him to take the bowl with him, and said he could send a cheque when it suited him. It's not every day in the week you'll find such a good purchaser."

Peter stared foolishly at his wife. He was in a pitiable plight.

"He's going now," Anna informed us, bending down by the window so she could see under the blind.

I hurried to the other window, and saw Jacobson stumping up the garden path to the wicket-gate with his hand-organ on his back, and the silver bowl under his arm. I had an uncanny feeling that the sun-flowers along the path were turning round to look after his grotesque figure.

Suddenly I made a fresh observation, and beckoned to the half-swooning Peter.

"Look," I whispered in his ear, "look what miserably inefficient liars we are! He's got *two* glass eyes!"

"Two *what*?" Peter panted.

"Look at the dog, man," I said.

Jacobson was being piloted by a poodle towards the wicket-gate. And then he was gone. Peter never saw him or the silver bowl again.

Towards autumn Anna began to wonder about her two thousand five hundred crowns. She needed that new fur coat. Peter held her at bay for a long time by saying you couldn't possibly write and ask for money from such a wealthy man as Jacobson. Finally Anna demanded Jacobson's address. *She* could write him, she said. So Peter had to make out a bill for the amount (even a man of means must occasionally resort to this long remedy for a brief ill).

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I drew the bill. Not that my signature was worth anything, but because at least two signatures are required. And in that way Anna got her fur coat.

When the time came for the bill to be renewed, I sent Peter a renewal form, signed with the name of Jacobson. Subsequently, I heard how this experiment turned out.

Peter went to the bank to carry out the transaction. The accountant inspected the bill, handed it back to Peter and said :

“ There’s a new drawer, I see.”

Peter looked at the paper, turned pale and muttered something about its being perhaps just as well to redeem the bill. When he had done so, he hastily left the building. Outside he met a friend whose greeting he left unnoticed.

The friend telephoned to Anna.

“ I’ve just met Peter. He looked queer. Thought I’d better telephone you. I think you ought to watch him, so he doesn’t do anything desperate.”

Since then, Peter has adhered strictly to the truth. And it is a fact that the red-bearded organ-grinder keeps me, too, even at the moment of writing, from many a tempting lie.

Beginning and end

MAISIE ROBERTON was walking alone, but her face was lively as if she was listening to some tale that pleased her. She was happy : she was in love : and the world was altogether lovely.

Yesterday had been so threatening — only yesterday. Yesterday she had thought that John would go to India alone. Last night they had discovered they must go together. Strange that the world could change its face in a day ! There was so little time. It would be all bustle. She would need so many clothes—the nicest possible with the least possible money. She had lain awake half the night planning. An exciting night, noisy with wind and rain. It sounded as if winter had come suddenly to drive summer out. It sounded like the end of lovely days for ever, and she would have been so mournful about it if there had not been this beginning with John.

She had slept at last and wakened to discover that summer was not gone yet. This morning was so demure ; it seemed to disown altogether that fuss of rain and whimper of wind. Storm ? There hadn't been any storm. There was just beauty that had swum through night into misty sunny morning. It was true the chrysanthemums lay low, their heads heavy with moisture, but for everything else the

shining drops were a new beauty, come upon it in the night.

The bracken that would soon be as red as rust was as yellow almost as buttercups. There were crimson haws and orange hips and scarlet rowans, and leaves everywhere as bright as flowers. A precious day, vivid on the very doorstep of winter. The leaves were pouring back the sap that the tree had given. They were healing its wounds before they wounded it. Not next year but some day they would be in the tree again. It was life, all life, and there was no death at all. The bright leaves would grow brown and sodden, but already buds were rounding to be ready for spring. And for the quietening birds there was spring ahead—not for all. There was cold and hunger. There *was* death, but . . . she would not think of it. There was some explanation that would be kind to her happiness. It was only that she was not wise enough to find it.

She hurried her steps when she came out of the drive on to the main road. It was swept so clean of traffic that it looked new. For the road summer was over. Only last week there had been a very important-looking young policeman on point duty at the cross-roads. Hotel buses and lorries piled high with luggage had swung south to the station. Cars had gone in procession north to the golf-course, bearing holiday-makers off for their last game. And cars with departing visitors had gone east. The beach would be deserted to-day and the sea busy about cleaning up the untidiness of the sands.

She went through the main street that was falling asleep for the winter. There were shopkeepers at their doors. They were finding leisure now to talk with one another, to sum up the season that had ended. Before paint-brushes, heralds of spring, appeared, she would be half-way across the world from here.

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She turned from the quiet road into one that was quieter still. This was where the doctor lived, and the lawyer, and the head master, and retired gentlefolk—a very respectable road indeed. It was a place of brass name-plates, of shining windows, daintily curtained, of doors painted to a satin finish. And flowers such as nurserymen describe as being “of compact growth” flourished discreetly in plots cut from little lawns—circular, triangular, crescent, diamond. And the paths to the doors gleamed with granite chips.

There was one house, squeezed thin and tall between its robuster fellows, that was nameless and numberless. Its dusty windows were tear-stained with rain. In that garden grasses ripened till hay-harvest, and remained unharvested; and the path that led from the unpainted gate to the unpainted door was furred with moss.

In the night, while the rain beat and the wind blew, Maisie had remembered Madeleine Gillespie. She could make the frocks that must be cheap and yet beautiful. But here, before her house, the girl paused. It was two years since she had been inside it, and though in the meantime she had passed the place often, she had not noticed how sad it had grown. Worse than sad, it was miserable. It was shouting its misery out loud in the street.

Yet she walked up the earthen path, keeping to the side of it to discourage a little the moss that grew thickest there. The brass of the bell-handle was brown with dirt, and rain-spotted. It creaked when she pulled it, and from within came a tinny jangling. The house sounded empty and dead. There came no answer and she was about to ring again when she heard the shuffle of slow feet in the passage. The door opened and a woman was staring at her with glazed eyes, stupidly, and the girl stared back—her lively eyes gone stupid too with amazement. This was worse than even

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the house had told. This was misery walking about on feet, putting in time till it should be dead.

She might as well go home. Madeleine Gillespie would make no more lovely clothes.

But she could not go at once. She must say something. She must do something. She could not be happy again, ever, unless she tried to help now.

Mrs. Gillespie's face was puffy and ghastly white; her eyelids were red and swollen. Her heavy hair was grotesquely piled on the top of her head, and strands of it were wispy about her face. And her clothes! She had always dressed quaintly, unfashionably. That had been a trick of hers to heighten, and it had heightened, the effect of the new mode which, she hinted delicately, was for her client alone. But her clothes had been good. These were old and stained, torn even. The boned bodice that fitted over her gathered skirt had once fitted trimly, but now it rucked about her waist in ugly lines, and on her breast it gaped between hooks and eyes that were half torn away.

"Good morning, Mrs. Gillespie."

"Good morning, Miss Maisie." She spoke slowly as if her words were heavy.

"Mayn't I come in? I've such a lot to tell you, and I do want your advice so badly."

"I haven't been very well. The place isn't very tidy, but you can come in if you like." And she opened the door grudgingly.

The sitting-room was unspeakably dreary. A coarse-leaved ivy crept from all sides of the window-frame, and dust and rain and winds salt from the sea allied with it to thwart the light. The colours in the carpet and wallpaper had faded first to a dusty grey and then been drowned in dust. On a table stood a tall glass vase, smeared inside with

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a slime of stems, that held an inch or two of foul greenish water and above that a rottenness that had once been flowers. There was a wooden bowl of rusty dusty pins. There was a litter of stuffs on the table, all evenly greyed. Not for months could they have been moved. A cheval glass, smudged and spotty, gave the room back to itself leeringly. It could not—mercifully, thought Maisie—redouble the smell of damp and decay.

"I think you'd better say your say and be gone, Miss Maisie. I'm sorry if I seem inhospitable, but I've got out of the way of seeing folks since I've been ill. They just upset me. They don't understand. I'm content enough when they let me a-be."

She looked as if she were going to cry, and Maisie, who had decided before ever the door was opened that her lovely frocks could not be made here, in pity rushed into speech and cast her decision aside.

"I'm going to be married and I want you to make some of my things. There's nearly five weeks. Oh, do say you will."

The woman's face stiffened; it lost its threat of tears. She spoke jerkily. "I'm sorry. I couldn't. It's just foolishness to ask me. You know it is."

"I think you're not kind."

"Kind? Kind?" Her voice was a bewildered whisper. The girl hurried into words again.

"If you don't help me I don't know what I'll do. I must have pretty things that nobody here but you can make, and I can't afford to go up to town for them."

"It's no use. I'm sorry, but it's no use, no use at all." Hopeless, monotonous words, but Maisie tried again.

"Listen," she said; "there are such lovely stuffs, silks that Uncle David has sent home from the East. You'd just

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love to work with them. And I thought"—her voice trembled with the fear that she was touching a place too raw to bear it—"it might be a beginning. Everybody will see my wedding-dress. I'll say who made it. I'll hardly need to say. And you'll be busy again. You'll love to be busy again."

"I don't want to begin now." Mrs. Gillespie spoke fiercely. That was something—to have got the deadness out of her voice and eyes. "I've got a kind of peace and I'm going to keep it. I don't want people. Why should I? It's little enough any of them have ever done for me. I've enough to keep me. I won't work, I tell you."

"You loved your work. I know you did. I've seen you with stuffs in your hands when your eyes were all bright because they saw something beautiful that nobody else could see. It must be wonderful to make things like that. Even though the material doesn't last the memory does. And while it lasts it changes things. Do you remember a green frock you once made me? But of course you can't. It was years and years ago. I was twelve, I think. It fluted out like a flower. There was smocking on it. I remember how people smiled at me when I wore it. I must have been shining with the joy of it. And I remember standing in the garden in the most wonderful sunshine. I remember the glow on marigolds, hosts and hosts of marigolds, butterflies above them. And I thought I smelt the sun. It is a lovely day to have for always, and but for you I shouldn't have it. Do be good to me. I've worn nothing pretty for years and years."

"You haven't told me who it is you are marrying. A stranger is he to the place?"

"It's John. John Rutherford."

"I might have guessed. I saw you pass the other day.

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Laughing you both were. So healthy and strong . . . in the sun. I might have guessed, but somehow your growing up together like that . . .” She left the sentence unfinished. Maisie watched her anxiously. The dresses didn’t matter much really. She and John would be happy together. She would need nothing to bring her alive, to make her realise she was alive, on her wedding day and after. The dresses didn’t matter at all. This woman mattered, this woman who looked through dirty panes and saw life go by laughing, in the sun.

“I can’t believe it’ll make all that difference to you. You’ll be happy, anyhow.”

Maisie had a moment’s terror in case her thoughts had spoken in the quiet of that room. She must go on talking to take away the fear of pity that was here.

“I think I’ll be happy anyhow, but I want the day to be as lovely as it can be. I want to keep it as I keep the marigolds. I want to remember it when I’m old—have it written upon me. I don’t know whether everybody comes alive in a lovely frock the way I do. It’s not what it makes me look like, but what it makes the world look like. Do you know?”

“No, I never cared what I wore, but I can guess right enough. I liked to see the dresses I made on the people I made them for. I sort of felt sometimes that I had made the people, too. If what you say is right, perhaps I did put a keenness on them. Power . . . that’s it. It’s power we all want. No. I don’t. I want nothing but peace, and—” she smiled as if to take the edge off what she was about to say; it was a pitiful twisting of her unhappy face—“you won’t let me have it.”

Maisie got up to go. “I’m sorry, but I can’t let you out of your promise. It was a promise, wasn’t it?”

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"I suppose so. But I mayn't be able to do anything. It's just possible I've lost my hands." She lifted them and looked at them curiously—tools long disused, that might not answer to her will. They trembled; she let them fall, and clasped them to make them still.

"I'll bring down the stuffs this afternoon." She looked at the dusty room. Impossible to bring them here. "No, I tell you what, you'll come to us. You'll stay with us till the work's done. Then you won't have to bother about cooking and cleaning. We'll take care of you."

"No," said Mrs. Gillespie sharply. "I couldn't do that. I couldn't stay." There was something like terror in her eyes.

"Of course you can stay. It's the only sensible thing to do. Give me one reason why you can't." There was one reason, but not one that could be given. The woman was silent.

"There," said Maisie triumphantly; "you haven't any. I'll come for you at three."

"I can't promise. I'll think about it."

Impulsively Maisie leant and kissed her, and then fled from the room.

Madeleine Gillespie sat, her hands sit clenched on their trembling. She heard the click of the front door that left her shut off from the world again. She stared across the dirty room; her eyes went further than its walls, found others, some set further off, but all built about their own ugliness. She looked at her life, and it looked back at her like a grinning thing. There was the little workroom at Sandside, where though the walls came close they were never terrible. An ugly box of a room, but the days there had been smooth and hopeful; they had led to London, away from

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cotton and wincey to silk and satin and lace. In spite of all that had happened afterwards there was still an excitement in the thought of the first peeps through curtains at the ladies who stepped from their carriages, the victories in the workroom, the praise, the envy, the beginning of that time in the limelight when she had talked with the ladies she had watched long from behind the curtain. Some had been severe and some smiling as they bade her remember this and that. Then she was her own mistress at last, but so soon came the dark time—headaches that smudged the world, drinking for strength to go on, drinking for warmth and comfort, drinking for forgetfulness, waking every time to a blacker world, weaker against stronger pain. And then the end—a piece of precious lace cut by her scissors. The pattern burned on her brain; the cut through it; threads twisted together long ago, not to be joined again, not though you would die to join them. Malcolm. She had not for years thought of Malcolm who married her then. She had learned her lesson. She was cured. If pain blackened the world there were doctors—so she had comforted herself and him. And he had believed her. She had felt so safe and sure with Malcolm, out of the world where the cutting of a wisp of lace counted as a crime. But long, dull days had followed when Malcolm was away. Desperately she had taken to a workshop, but this time in the safety of Malcolm's house. Cottons again, and dreary housework, the same day after day for years. The house had slipped down out of sight; there was only the workroom, and when Malcolm came home at nights he had hated the untidiness. He had not been patient. He had not understood. Nobody whose head was not racked with pain for weeks on end could ever know how mazy the world grew, how incredibly useless it seemed to dust and polish blocks of wood. She had grown too tired

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to fight. She had drunk again, for strength to go on, for warmth and comfort, for forgetfulness. There was no workroom then. There was nothing, for one day, without a word, Malcolm went and he never came back. His money came. It had been bitter at first. She would use it till she was well enough to work. She used it still. For years now it had been just money that at the end of every month she waited for. It was the money the postman gave her, and there was no shame of Malcolm to hold her from its spending.

In lightning flashes scenes from these years struck at her brain. A surge of anger rose in her against this girl, who had brought back the pattern of the lace, had brought Malcolm back.

"We'll take care of you." She knew. The girl knew, and all her smarming ways were pity and scorn. Butterflies and marigolds! But she had kissed her. She was just sorry; she was not scornful. And it might be true that nobody else could make her a dress with memories in it. Was it worth while trying? Could she do it if she tried? Self-pity, hope, shame, pride, anger buffeted her by turn.

At last, with no decision in her mind but only troubled bewilderment, she set about cleaning the house. The air grew thick with disturbed dust. With the help of a chisel she opened the tight-shut windows. Her back ached intolerably; her breath came short and laboured. She was working still when the door-bell rang. She looked from the window and saw the pony carriage at the gate. Well, she wasn't going. She couldn't go. She had cleaned her house because it was dirty. Nobody had driven her to it. Now she would stay in it. She would leave the windows open. No need to shut out the air. But she would not open the front door, not till dusk. At dusk she would go down the

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road to the inn. She would hand in one bottle and Mrs. Bennet would hand out another. She thought with pride of the control she had learned—never to bring back more than an evening's supply, just enough to make a quietness at the day's end. She could take care of herself. She would show them.

The bell sounded again. As if mesmerised she moved to the door. There was a vivid face that must not be darkened. Time enough later to shut the door.

Maisie sat in the room where the dust was settling again, but this time lightlier. Her heart glowed with pleasure when she saw the work that she had begun. She was so sure of the success of her venture, so proud at the thought of a wasted life that would be brought back to usefulness and happiness by her hand. This was the beginning. The end might be London again. And when Mrs. Gillespie came down from changing her dress, Maisie felt secure in her hope. The little dressmaker's hair was smooth and tidy under her quaint hat with its cauliflower bow. Her face had been livened with the touch of water. Her cloak and dress were old-fashioned, but they were clean and good. She carried herself with the air of one who could hold her own with all sorts of people. She had cast her furtive air with her old stained clothes.

To Madeleine Gillespie, too, as she was driven slowly up the avenue to the Robertons' house came hope. The year stood at the autumn, but to her eyes the country had the freshness of spring. For so long she had known nothing but her bedroom and her kitchen and the strip of road to the inn. Faded wallpaper and nightmare thoughts had tangled together about her bed. She had forgotten clouds and trees and water. And here they were all polished up to

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a wonderful newness. The sky was cool and quiet. There was a very little wind that loosened pale leaves and bright ones and let them drift lightly down. She could easily find all this again if she would. It might be worth while.

Weeks passed. The great wardrobe in the spare room lost its strangeness of naked wood and became domestic with its load of dresses. And in the chest of drawers lay piles of underclothes most delicately made. "I'll leave the wedding-dress till the end," she said, "till I get my hand in." She regretted that saying now. She should have done the wedding-dress and then gone. That was as much as anyone could expect of her.

These weeks had been bitterly hard for her. There had been times when it seemed sheerly impossible to go on. Maisie had been there always wherever she turned—coaxing, laughing, planning for busy days ahead, doling out tastes of wine—poor cold stuff that had no comfort in it. There had been hunger and thirst—worse than of body only. And the few moments when the old joy had tingled strangely through her veins were not enough to outweigh the dream of nights misted with peace and of a house shut against the world. She was pitiful to herself when she saw her face, lined and haggard, look at her from the mirror. There was still the satin to cut and stitch. When that was done she would see to it that nobody caught her again.

And Maisie was weary. She had watched the woman's eyes grow restless. She had listened to her pleading to be allowed to go home just for a night or two. She had seen the look of cunning on her face when she said, "I think I'll just go for a walk down to the village." And when Maisie had gone with her, it had always ended, after a step or two, with "I think after all I'm too tired. I'll go in and lie down."

BEGINNING AND END

Three days before the wedding the dress was almost finished. Madeleine Gillespie worked feverishly that evening before the white-shrouded table. She must finish to-night and get away to-morrow. She could bear this no longer. The next night tantalised her. It was so near, so out of reach.

There was a wintry chill in the air, a desolate note in the wind. She shivered. If she could only . . . She put the thought from her and went grimly on with her work. Then came a shout of laughter from the room below, and fury shook her. They could laugh, could they? They little knew the torment they had put upon her. And all for what? Memories, the girl had said. Memories! God, but the world would have been better if there could have been less of them. She looked at the clock. She got up. It was time to go out. She put on her cloak and went softly downstairs.

A raw night—November in it, clammy and cold. She hurried. She would be warm soon. She felt gleefully the thickness of her purse. The end of the month had come bringing money before the last was done. She had no bottle with her. She hesitated at the thought of going home for it. That would take time. Mrs. Bennet would have stopped having the little bottle in readiness for her now. She would have a whole bottle. She could take it or leave it as she liked. It was easy now after all these weeks without it.

She came back up the avenue stealthily, keeping close to the darkness of the trees. Her fingers clutched and loosened on the bottle to reassure them that it was there. Comfort was in the very touch of it. In a minute or two at most she would feel warmth stealing through her again. Just one drink and then she would finish the dress before she

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had another, and then she would sleep and then she would go home.

She crept into the house unnoticed, but on the stairs Maisie met her. She saw the fear in the girl's eyes and it angered her so that she wanted to strike out at those widened eyes. She put one hand out from the hiding of her coat and smiled. It was empty. She drew it in again, fumbled, and put out the other. The horrible blue eyes stared still.

"Have you been far?"

"No, not far; just past the gate and back. My head ached. I want to finish to-night."

"Oh, but why should you? You mustn't tire yourself out. You leave it till to-morrow. Come to your bed now." Maisie put a hand on her arm to lead her to bed. She drew herself together to be free of that touch as if it were a hurtful thing, and she rushed for the open door of the workroom; shut the door; locked it.

Many times that night Maisie went to the door hoping to find the chink of light gone from under it, but when she went to bed it was still there.

In the morning she went fearfully to Mrs. Gillespie's bedroom. The bed had not been slept in, and in alarm she hurried to the spare room which had been made the workroom. What if the door were still locked? But no, it gave at once to her hand. And by the table that was shrouded still in white stood Madeleine Gillespie. The tears were rolling down her cheeks, and she was mopping helplessly with a rag at a yellow stain on the white satin.

J. HARRISON

The Bridal Bed

RAIN, a soft autumn drizzle, gentle, yet persistent, falling with a drip, drip, drip on the damp earth, or muddy pavements: rain, grey with London dirt, trickling off palings and benches, and running down the stems of sooty chrysanthemums in public gardens. Sometimes heavier, coming down in a straight silver sheet, with a dull, steady beat, or wild, when a gust of wind blew it in sudden sharp flurries against the big buildings, till it returned to the soft drizzle, leaving lumbering 'buses to splash muddy water over pedestrians, huddled at the edge of the road, and policemen, in wet, shining mackintoshes to let loose streams of taxis, the drivers' faces hidden by the upturned collars of their overcoats. Greasy roads, muddy pavements, wet, shining slate roofs, mackintoshes, umbrellas, the smell of damp clothing, the squelch of wet shoes, and always the changing rhythms of the rain, the timeless drip, drip, drip, that marked for me the beginning of it all, and marks now the remembrance.

It was one of the sudden heavy downpours that drove me to seek shelter that wet day. The street had cleared suddenly, the scurrying figures and black umbrellas had taken shelter, and I was alone with the rain-drops dancing on the pavement, so I turned to the first doorway and

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stepped in. It happened to be an antique shop, a queer dingy little place, with no name above it, only a number. A gust of wind blew the rain into the doorway, so that I went in hastily. An old, cracked bell tinkled as the door moved, the sound echoed through the long, low shop, that stretched back into a dimness and was lost. There was a pause, as the echo died away, then I heard footsteps, and a bent figure appeared, an old man, with a white beard, and very blue eyes in the parchment colour of his face, wearing a velvet jacket and smoking cap, and soft carpet slippers.

"The rain was so heavy that I wondered if I might shelter here?" I said. "May I look round while I wait?"

"Surely," said the old man, in a pleasant, low pitched voice, "surely."

He accepted my explanation as simply as I offered it. He smiled, and walked away into the shadows, leaving me to do as I pleased.

A strange silence, and shadowy dimness hung over the place. A look round showed me that I should not find many treasures here. Everything was genuine enough, but of very little value. The only thing that interested me was a bed, a huge four-poster, that occupied a large part of the shop. It had brocade curtains, and quaint carvings of cupids, and I was particularly interested to find on it the arms of my own family. At some time it must have belonged to us, perhaps to a distant branch, but I was curious to know how it had found its way there. I remembered my old nurse telling stories when I was a child, something about an ill-omened bed, but she had ceased when she found I was listening.

The rain was falling fast, and with a sigh of impatience I sat down on the edge of the old bed to wait. The rain

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beat on the windows, and streamed over the glass, and I sat listening to the sound of it, patter, patter, patter, drip, drip, drip, till I was half asleep. It was another sound, mingling with the rain that drew me back, a pattering sound, too, but different, the light quick tap of a woman's high heels. The heavy rain-clouds obscured the sky, and the old shop was a dusky cavern. I caught a faint, elusive scent of lilies and saw someone coming towards me, a slender girl, barely more than seventeen she seemed. In the dimness I saw her white arms and neck, the shimmer of her silk frock, and the golden gleam of her bright hair, curls, drawn back and fastened with a comb. She ran up to me eagerly, saying :

"Why, Roland . . ." then paused and drew back. "It is Roland, isn't it? You look a little strange."

I knew she was mistaking me for someone else, but I was willing to profit by the mistake.

"My name is Roland Whaley," I said. (I had been called after my old grandfather.)

"Roland Whaley?" she said, puzzled, "but of course I knew. How did I know?"

"Oh, there are a lot of us," I said. "I have a great many cousins of the same name."

(My old grandfather had been a man to conciliate.)

I was sure she smiled then, and I wished the light had been better that I might have seen it.

"You came here to buy?" her voice was very light and sweet.

"I'm afraid I came to shelter from the rain."

"Oh, I understand. Still, I love the rain. It was in rain that I first . . ." she broke off abruptly.

For some time I talked to her, making any excuse to keep her there. The sound of her voice, light, caressing,

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the delicious gaiety of her laughter, the quick grace of her movements enchanted me. She seemed to have lived shut up in the shop, everything seemed a novelty to her, she was all eagerness to hear. We were talking softly, amid the drip of the rain when she stopped abruptly.

"I must go," she said.

"Oh, stay a minute," I entreated, but she would not wait. She was moving swiftly into the shadows.

"When may I see you again?" I cried.

"Here," her voice was like an echo from the shadows. I caught the flash of her bright hair and she was gone.

The old man shuffled out a moment later, rubbing his eyes.

"The rain is still heavy," he said. "I have been asleep in it and dreaming."

"Pleasant dreams, I hope?" I said.

"More than pleasant. I dreamt of . . . my mother."

He fell silent at that. More from curiosity than anything else I asked him the price of the old bed I had been sitting on, but he shook his head, saying it was not for sale.

"Where did you buy it?" I asked.

"I did not buy it. It was my mother's marriage bed."

And he would say no more of it. A few minutes later the rain lessened and I left the shop.

I went home to dream of the girl with the enchanting laugh and bright curls. For days I dreamed of her, till I made my way back to the shop. The old man was there when I went in, fast asleep in a corner, and peering into the shadows I found the girl, perched on a step ladder, dusting books.

"Good morning, sir," she greeted me gaily, nodding and smiling. A book slipped from her little hand, encased in a thick leather glove to keep it from the dust, and as I

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picked it up for her our hands touched, a slight contact, but it sent my heart rocketing.

"Did you come to buy something?" she asked.

"I came to learn your name," I said boldly.

"Learn what you know?" she asked. "Well, there is no charge for it. It is Elizabeth Anne."

"Elizabeth Anne—what?"

"That is all. Elizabeth Anne . . . and whatever you choose to make it."

I knew what I should have chosen, but dared not say it.

"Please Elizabeth Anne," the name came naturally to me, "may I help dust the books."

"No, Roland," she used my name as naturally as I had used hers, and I thrilled to it. "I am nearly finished. I confess I read so much that I take longer over it."

"Come down and talk to me," I suggested, and, after some coaxing, she came.

Only the old furniture, the tall clocks, and stiff-backed chairs, knew what we said to each other, that day and many days after, sitting on the first step of the narrow stair that opened off at one side of the shop, Elizabeth Anne a little way up, I lower, at her feet. Then suddenly she rose and with a murmured goodbye, a wave of her little hand, vanished up the stairs as the old man stirred and woke. I fancied she did not want him to know I had been talking to her so I did not speak of her at all.

I often called at the shop after that, ostensibly to buy and chat with the old man. He was a gentle soul, full of kindness and enthusiasm for beauty, and I wanted to tell him of all there was between Elizabeth Anne and myself, but she was reluctant.

"He would not understand," she said, and shook her bright curls. "But try if you wish."

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So one day, when we had been talking, I said to him :

"I have wanted to tell you, sir, of my feelings for your grand-daughter."

He turned his very blue eyes on me with a curious puzzled expression.

"Grand-daughter?" he said. "I have no grand-daughter."

I began to understand then of what Elizabeth Anne had been speaking and said no more.

I grew very fond of the old man and often sat in the dim shop talking to him, and listening to his stories. In many ways he was understanding and sympathetic, with a strange likeness to my own father, who died when I was a motherless boy of fifteen. He liked best to talk of his mother, his eyes shining, his lips smiling at the thought of her. She must have been very lovely, very lovable, very like my Elizabeth Anne, I thought. In the end he would generally fall asleep, drowsing, with his head against a post of the old bed, and then Elizabeth Anne would slip from the shadows and come to me.

As the months passed I saw clearly that the old man was failing. His face took on a waxen pallor, his long, finely-shaped hands, again curiously like my dead father's, were almost transparent, he grew tired easily. Then one day when I went to the shop I was greeted by a stranger, a buxom woman with dark curly hair.

"Is the old gentleman in?" I asked. I still did not know his name, no one seemed to know it.

"In? Oh, he's in, but he's been ill in bed these past few days," she replied.

I told her how sorry I was to hear it and chatted with her. It seemed she was his mother's cousin's daughter, and she had come to look after him; she was afraid she would not be needed very long now. She seemed to cherish

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an affection for the old man, but she never mentioned his grand-daughter, Elizabeth Anne. When I asked if I could see him, she said she would find out and disappeared. A moment later I heard the quick tap of hurrying feet and Elizabeth Anne came from the shadows. Her face was pale, almost transparent, and I read anxiety in it.

"My darling," I said, "I have heard the news. Is he really so ill?"

Her eyes, blue as his, looked into mine as she answered:

"He is very ill."

"There is no hope? It is only a matter of time?"

"Yes, time. But what is time? Now, then, for ever," she sighed.

"I came to ask his permission to marry you," I said.

"But, of course, it is impossible . . ."

"Impossible? Why?" Her hand was lightly on my arm. "No, not impossible. You will marry me, soon?"

"You know how much I wish it," I said.

"Then do it, do it now. Oh, I am not heartless, as you must think, it is for his good: I know it."

Suddenly I was caught up by a wave of emotion that I did not understand.

"I will do it, as soon as it is possible," I said. "And this shall be our bridal bed," I laid my hand on the old bed which had stood so long in the shop.

"Our bridal bed," her voice was a soft, passionate echo, and she was gone.

The woman came back to say the old man would see me. He was lying in bed, his blue eyes dimmed, his mind wandering so that he did not know me.

"You want to buy something, sir?" his voice shook.

"I wanted to buy the bed you have out there," I replied as steadily as I could.

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The change in him was immediate, he shook with protest.

"No, no, sir, that can't be. It was my mother's bed, her bridal bed, her marriage bed, I can't part with it. It must be kept in the family . . ."

I soothed him and in a few minutes left.

The woman, his mother's cousin's child, stopped me in the shop to ask me about the old bed.

"You really want it, sir? "

"But he won't part with it."

"Oh, that will be all right. He has always been queer, but the fact is he needs money badly, so if you want to buy it . . ."

"But he values it, it was his mother's bridal bed."

An odd expression came into her face.

"You can see how much he wanders, sir. His mother was never married."

I looked at her quietly.

"Perhaps I shouldn't have told you, but you'll see now that it's just his imaginings. His mother was a lovely girl, I've heard tell, she lived here with her father, her mother was dead. We don't know who it was, she would never say, but she wouldn't give the child a name. That's why there is none up outside. So, if you like to have the bed, sir, you're welcome, and poor old cousin Roland will be none the wiser."

"Roland, is that his name? "

"The only one he has, sir."

I bought the bed and it was moved to my flat the next day.

My old housekeeper behaved very strangely when she saw it. She had been in the family for years, and I had never known her forget her manners, but she did that day. In the end she went down on her knees, and with tears

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in her eyes begged me to have nothing to do with the bed.

"But, Sarah," I said, "this is just nonsense. What is the matter with the bed?"

She looked at it fearfully.

"It's cursed for the Whaleys, Mr. Roland. I know it is, my mother told me. Don't have it, don't touch it. It'll bring you pain and unhappiness."

"Oh, you've seen it before?"

"No, but I've heard of it."

"But it hasn't been in the family for years."

"It was, in your grandfather's time. He gave it away."

"To whom?"

"No one knows, except that it was a woman, the only one he loved, they say; but he wasn't allowed to marry her. It was when he was young, and it wasn't till he was nearly sixty that he married your grandmother. What ever the reason, that bed knows it, and it brings no good to a Whaley."

"It's a lot of silly gossip," I said. "I mean to keep the bed and sleep in it."

She said no more, but she went away shivering. I told no one that I was bringing a bride to it. I would break it gently to Sarah later; my parents were dead, no one else mattered. And then I began to wonder if the old man in the antique shop, who was to be my grandfather by marriage, was not already my uncle.

My wedding day dawned with a leaden sky, and incessant rain. When I went to the shop to fetch Elizabeth Anne the old man was still alive, but going fast.

"He just lies and babbles of his mother," the cousin said.

Elizabeth Anne came from his room and put her hand in mine.

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"You will come now?" I asked, and she bent her head.

"It is my greatest wish that I should marry Roland Whaley," she said, and we went out into the street.

All that followed was like a dim and beautiful dream. I remember the church, darkened by rain, the drumming of rain on the roof, the light, sweet sound of Elizabeth Anne's voice as she made her responses, the dark vestry, and the big register in which she wrote in a slanting, old-fashioned hand, "Elizabeth Anne Stanton," beside my "Roland Whaley." Then I took her home.

I had told them to let me know at once if the old man grew worse, but the hours sped and we had no word. We sat in the dark, empty flat, hand in hand, waiting. As the clock struck ten Elizabeth Anne shivered.

"You are tired, my darling?"

"Yes, I will go now."

She rose and put her hands in mine.

"You have married me and given me your name," she said. "I thank you, Roland Whaley."

Before I could touch her she drew away her hands and was gone. I could not hear her feet on the stairs, she went so lightly.

I sat before the fire dreamily content. I must have slept there, for when I next looked at the clock I saw, with a start, that it pointed to half-past eleven. A door banged and old Sarah came in, I had sent her out for the day, carrying a small packet.

"I met a woman with this, sir, as I came in, she said it was urgent."

I looked hastily at the covering letter.

"Dear Sir,

The old gentleman passed away quite suddenly to-night at ten o'clock to the minute. There was no time to tell

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anyone. He was quite clear for the last few minutes, and wanted me to give you this as soon as he was gone, so I enclose it.

Yours faithfully,

“Lily Skinner.”

Immediately the thought leaped into my mind, “I must tell Elizabeth.”

Old Sarah, standing beside me, suddenly gave a cry and put her hand on my shoulder.

“There’s someone in the room,” she cried.

I could feel Elizabeth quite close to me. I almost thought her hand was in mine, then she left. Old Sarah sank on a chair.

“It’s gone now,” she whispered. “It’s that accursed bed. Don’t touch it, Mr. Roland.”

But I was thinking only of Elizabeth Anne. The old man’s packet still in my hand, I raced up to the bedroom.

The door was closed and I opened it quietly. The shaded light still burned and illuminated the bed. It stood there, untouched, empty. Elizabeth Anne was not there. My heart gave one awful, sickening movement, then lay stunned in the misery of realisation. I ran over the flat, from room to room, calling her name, and there was no reply. I knew Elizabeth Anne had gone, gone for ever, the Bridal Bed would always be empty. Presently I came back to the empty room, where the light still burned, and sat on the edge of the bed, twisting the packet in my hands, till I realised what I was holding. Slowly I untied the wrapping and read the old man’s letter. They said he died that night at ten o’clock, and at ten o’clock Elizabeth Anne gave me her last farewell.

“I feel you loved my mother,” the old man wrote, “so I leave you this, and beg you to keep it for her sake.

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Also I know it would have pleased her if I could be buried under my own name.

“Roland Whaley.”

The letter dropped to the ground as I sat thinking, then I opened the last wrapping, on which was written: “My beloved Mother.”

It was a miniature, set in pearls, of Elizabeth Anne, my Elizabeth Anne. Yet on the back, in the slanting, pointed writing, I found: “From Roland Whaley to me, Elizabeth Anne, 18——.” Her portrait, her bed, her bridal bed. “I think you loved my mother,” the old man had written. Love her? My darling, my wife, Elizabeth Anne, of the blue eyes and bright hair. Elizabeth Anne . . . And the rain beat, beat, beat on the window and streamed down the panes.

Strange Faces

IT was just an ordinary little shop, like hundreds of others in Paris, and passing by you would hardly have given it a second glance.

In no other city are there so many barbers (heaven only knows how they all manage to make a living!) and Papa Bebert was certainly of the most humble. He had only one chair, not the kind into which you sink luxuriously, with a seat of soft leather, perfectly adjustable, like a dentist's, but simple and homely, rather like Papa Bebert himself; the one up-to-date thing in the shop was a sort of gas-heater, of which secretly Papa Bebert was a little afraid, and which under his loving care, and only then, provided a thin stream of hot, or more often lukewarm, water.

But then Papa Bebert's customers were not very grand; school children whose parents had to save a *son* or two wherever they could, the trades people of the neighbourhood, a *poule*, a little chicken with sadly clipped feathers, or a young gentleman whose flashy clothes, more often than not, made a brave showing on a hungry pocketbook—bits of driftwood from the busy river that flows along the Boulevard Clichy.

And yet, in his simple way, Papa Bebert was an expert. No one, not even Antoine himself, had a lighter hand, a surer

touch, a more artistic eye. His shave was a gentle caress, his hair-wave a poem ; and his conversation was so cheerful, so friendly, that when you left you felt you had got more than your money's worth.

Papa Bebert prided himself on making a friend every time a new customer came into his shop. He tried to find out all he could about him ; his business, and his first name, and whether or not he was married. And when you had come to him once or twice, no matter who you were, your credit was established.

"People never cheat me," said Papa Bebert. "So why shouldn't I trust them ? If they can't pay me to-day, they'll pay as soon as they can."

"And what if they didn't ?" his daughter would point out to him. "You're too soft, Papa. Ask August. Ask anybody."

But then Papa Bebert would smile, and pat her cheek, and shake his head, as much as to say, "*Ma foi !* I ought to know what I'm doing. After twenty years !"

In the twenty years, as a matter of fact, he had saved almost nothing at all. But he never let that trouble him. Sometimes he had to deny himself a little luxury, a cigar perhaps, an extra *apéritif*. But there was so much to be grateful for. If he had his life to live over again, he often told himself, he wouldn't have it any different. He was a happy man.

This doesn't mean that Papa Bebert was altogether satisfied. What man is ? He had a wish which he hoped would come true before he died. He dreamed of making some day a wig, so perfect, so exquisite, that people would stop outside the window of his shop, open-mouthed, to stare at it.

A wig of wigs. A masterpiece !

Now had his shop been on the avenue de l'Opera, for instance, or on the rue de Rivoli, it would have been quite a

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sensible dream. For when it came to wigs, indeed to any form of make-up, Papa Bebert undoubtedly had a certain flair, a touch of genius even. He might have brought himself to the attention of a motion-picture director working in the studios at Joinville. There is no telling what he might not have accomplished. He might have ended his career in Hollywood, a valuable asset to a mighty industry, making the loveliest star lovelier than nature intended, the ugliest villain more forbidding, going to work every morning in his own car, with a liveried chauffeur, and in the evening returning to one of those places—you would hardly call them homes—that enhance, if not the natural beauty, at least the real estate value of the Hollywood hills.

But such thoughts, needless to say, never entered Papa Bebert's mind. And it was just as well, since no motion-picture director, nor anyone else for that matter interested in wigs and the mysteries of make-up, was at all likely to find his way into that little, forgotten side street.

This was his world; a few blocks of old houses, the cobblestones worn smooth by the traffic of a hundred years, the narrow sidewalk, which nobody took the trouble to keep clean, the café at the corner where he drank his daily *apéritif*, his work, the gossip of the neighbourhood. What went on outside, in Germany, or America, or China; that was something you read about over your morning coffee. Not nearly so important as the baby Madame Glacemin was expecting across the street, or the game of chess that he played every Saturday evening with M. Salmon, the apothecary.

Papa Bebert lived above his shop, in three rooms, which he shared with his daughter and son-in-law. Valentine was a good girl, and she did the housework and the cooking and kept everything spic and span. The home was really hers, for Papa Bebert had given her the furniture as a wedding present.

Of course there were times when he was in the way. In the happiest of marriages there are little quarrels, a hard word now and then not meant for a third party. Then, too, returning home after working hard all day, August wanted to be alone with his wife. They were young and in love ; it was only natural. So, in the evenings after their frugal supper, Papa Bebert would light his pipe and slip away downstairs to his work-room, a tiny cubbyhole at the back of the shop. Here, in slippered comfort, with his make-up box, little pots of paste, paints such as an artist might use, all manner of queer things, he felt at home. He could potter about and dream his dreams. No one ever disturbed him. It was a tiny kingdom over which he ruled, and he guarded it jealously, even against Valentine and August.

A burglar breaking in at night would have been scared to death. He would have found himself surrounded by an array of heads, all very lifelike ; pretty girls with laughing eyes, their lips a flash of red ; handsome ladies with the simpering charm fashionable in the days when Papa Bebert was a boy ; elegant young men neatly pomaded ; elderly gentlemen with waxed moustaches and beautiful beards. All sorts of faces. Some of them were only half finished, and others were in the nature of a joke. Sometimes, when in a frivolous mood, Papa Bebert would copy the features of some person prominent in the news of the day, a diplomat, perhaps, or a murderer. And then he would rub his hands and chuckle with satisfaction, and tell himself what a great artist he was. There was nothing he couldn't do with a face if he set his mind to it. As M. Salmon, who took a keen interest in politics, once remarked, he could make up a jackass to look like a senator. Everybody in the little street agreed that Papa Bebert was a genius.

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"But what good does it do him?" they would add; "poor old man! he never sells anything."

And always Papa Bebert answered cheerfully:

"Just wait and see. I'll surprise you all some day. I'm going to do great things!"

And he was right.

Fame came to him suddenly, and before he knew what was happening to him, in the wink of an eye, he was plunged into an amazing adventure.

He never told anybody about it. Even if he had, no one, not even Valentine and August, not even the police, would have believed him. It was too incredible, altogether too fantastic. Afterwards, thinking about it, he sometimes found it hard to believe it himself. It couldn't have happened, not really.

But then Papa Bebert would remember that afternoon when he met M. Golowin for the first time. . . .

It was late, and he was thinking of closing up the shop as the door swung open and M. Golowin came in. Papa Bebert noticed at once that he was very well dressed and looked like a gentleman. He wanted a shave. The conversation was quite casual at first, about the weather, and the relative qualities of various hair tonics. Then, somehow, they got to talking about wigs. Papa Bebert pointed to the one he had in the window.

"My latest creation," he explained. "Of course," he added politely, "Monsieur doesn't need a wig—not for himself."

"I take an interest in such things—a truly beautiful wig—."

Papa Bebert fairly beamed. "I have many others—if Monsieur is interested I can show him such work as he wouldn't find anywhere else in Paris."

They spent nearly an hour together. M. Golowin, it

seemed, knew a good deal about wigs and make-up.

"I'm only an amateur, of course," he added with a smile. "But what you are showing me here is remarkable—I had no idea it was possible—"

"Anything is possible," said Papa Bebert with satisfaction. "I can change any face—just as you want it—why, it's easy—look!"

M. Golowin watched him closely.

"Marvellous!" he had to admit. "If I didn't see it with my own eyes—now take myself, for instance—could you change my face so that it would look like somebody else's—so perfectly, I mean, that nobody would know?"

"Of course," said Papa Bebert. "But surely Monsieur isn't serious?"

M. Golowin hesitated a moment. "Maybe I am—yes," he added suddenly, "I believe I'll do it. It would be lots of fun. See, here is a photograph of a friend of mine—"

Papa Bebert looked at it and saw the face of an elderly man, grey-haired, with a little beard.

"Could you make me look just like him—such a perfect likeness that even my friend himself couldn't tell the difference?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand," protested Papa Bebert.

"Haven't I told you?" said M. Golowin with a shrug.

"Come now, do you want the job, or don't you?"

Did he want the job? Papa Bebert's heart nearly stopped beating.

"I—I'll do it."

"Good! I rely on you, then. Of course you'll want a little something in advance—"

"No, no—that's quite all right," faltered Papa Bebert.

But M. Golowin didn't do business that way. He insisted on leaving a deposit of five hundred francs. Again Papa

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Bebert's heart nearly stopped. Surely he must be dreaming. Five hundred francs ! Why, sometimes he didn't earn that much in a whole month.

"How long will it take you ?" asked M. Golowin. "The day after to-morrow. All right. I'll be in at the same time." As he was about to leave he added casually : "Oh, yes ! There is one thing more. I wish you wouldn't talk about this to anyone. You never can tell. This friend of mine might hear of it. And then our little joke would be spoilt of course."

Papa Bebert thought that request rather strange, but he promised to keep the job a secret. It may be that he didn't believe M. Golowin entirely. But, after all, what business was it of his ?

So, that evening right after supper, he settled down, with the photograph of M. Golowin's friend in front of him, and long after Valentine and August had gone to bed he was still working busily, with nimble, inspired fingers.

When M. Golowin came again at the appointed time everything was in readiness. The wig was a thing of perfection, carefully conceived and exquisitely fashioned ; the make-up was so true, so lifelike, that M. Golowin, when finally he stood in front of a mirror and looked at himself, was for a moment speechless.

"Are you satisfied ?" asked Papa Bebert, smiling.

M. Golowin was—more than satisfied. He was delighted.

"Magnificent !" he cried, as he turned this way and that, admiring his reflection. Not his, that is to say. He was gone, as completely as if he had vanished into the air. It was as though a magician had waved a magic wand. In front of the mirror stood the elderly, grey-haired man from whose photograph Papa Bebert had worked.

M. Golowin chuckled. "If my friend were here now he

wouldn't believe his eyes, *hein*? But are you quite sure," he added, taking another look at the wonderful disguise, "I don't want to take any chances, you understand. How will it be in the daylight?"

Papa Bebert smiled again. "When I put on a make-up, it stays on. As long as you keep out of the sun—."

"Well, I'll let you know how the joke turns out," promised M. Golowin. "Now, how much do I owe you? Shall we say, another five hundred?"

"No, no," protested Papa Bebert. "That is too much. Really, I couldn't take it."

"Nonsense," said M. Golowin cheerfully. "Don't be a fool. It's worth all of a thousand francs to me. Besides," he added, "I may need you again some day."

He was so pleased that he almost took Papa Bebert in his arms and kissed him.

As for Papa Bebert, he didn't know what to say. He was beside himself with gratitude. He thought happily of the thousand francs safe in his pocket. How surprised Valentine and August would be when he told them!

"I suppose there's no harm in my telling them now?" he asked, just before M. Golowin left the shop.

"You can do as you like about that," said M. Golowin. "But I'd wait if I were you. Until to-morrow evening, anyway." As though on an afterthought, he added pleasantly: "And remember, my friend. Whatever happens, don't worry."

Now what, Papa Bebert asked himself, did he mean by that? But, then, there were a number of things he didn't understand. Well, he decided, it was M. Golowin's affair. He must be a very rich man. A crazy idea, certainly, to spend a thousand francs just to play a joke on somebody.

Of course, Valentine and August noticed that something

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had happened the moment Papa Bebert came upstairs. His cheeks were flushed, his eyes bright. Little waves of excitement welled up within him. During supper he nearly bubbled over, upsetting a glassful of wine on the tablecloth.

"What *is* the matter with you this evening?" asked Valentine.

But, thinking of M. Golowin's parting words, Papa Bebert didn't tell her. When he went to bed he took the secret with him, and he tucked it away carefully under his pillow.

M. Golowin's joke was a huge success. By noon the police had been notified; an hour later the first extra came out; long before evening all Paris knew about it. You could hear people discussing it in the cafés, along the boulevards, everywhere—even in the little street where Papa Bebert had his shop.

Never before had there been such a crime, so original, so almost unbelievable. Reading about it, even though it was a dastardly affair, you couldn't help smiling, chuckling even, at the cool impertinence of it. Had it happened in the United States, in Chicago for instance, it would have been bad enough. But in Paris!

As a matter of fact, it couldn't have happened in Chicago, for there when large sums of money are transferred from one bank to another this is done in an armoured car with a guard of police armed to the teeth. A hold-up is out of the question, and not even the most desperate criminal would attempt it. But in Paris there is only the bank's messenger, an old man as a rule, who has attained to this important, if ill-paid, job after years of service. His only protection is his uniform and the badge he wears, and he carries the fortune that has been entrusted to him, in plain view, very simply, in a leather bag attached to a strap or sometimes a chain around his neck. He has a regular route, which he

follows patiently, rather like a postman, and sometimes, though he is not supposed to, he stops to have a cup of coffee or a glass of beer at his favourite *bistro*. Everybody knows him. He never has any trouble. The thought that he might be held up never so much as occurs to him. Nor does it occur to anybody else.

It was no wonder, therefore, that this crime was a sensation. The facts were few. A masterpiece, whether in fiction or in crime, is usually simple.

That morning the messenger of a certain well-known bank, Alphonse Barabin by name, came to work, as he had done every morning for nearly thirty years, and an hour later he left with a large sum of money, crisp, new notes of the Banque de France; unfortunately there were also some not so new and on that account more easily disposable; he was seen walking along the Boulevard des Italiens, he crossed the place de l'Opera, and after that he disappeared. When by noon he had not returned, and it was learned that he never reached his destination, the bank for which he worked began to feel uneasy, and the police being notified started at once to investigate. The first thing they did, of course, was to go to his home—he was a bachelor and lived alone in a little flat not far from the Bastille—and here they found the real Alphonse Barabin, gagged and bound to the foot of his own bed. He was otherwise unharmed, and he told how early that morning the doorbell rang, and when he answered it he saw a man standing outside; he couldn't remember what he looked like; for suddenly, as he was about to ask him what he wanted, something hit him, and after that everything was a blank until he recovered consciousness and found himself gagged and bound, as he was when the police arrived.

So far it was all quite plain; there was no reason to doubt Alphonse Barabin's story. For thirty years he had been the

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bank's messenger, a trusted servant, a man of character, capable, honest.

But who, then, was the other, the Alphonse Barabin who had taken his place at the bank? Everyone who had seen him could swear that he looked just the same as always.

There was a picture of Alphonse Barabin on every front page. An elderly man, grey-haired, with a little beard.

Papa Bebert recognized him at once.

It was M. Golowin's friend!

Fortunately there was no one in the shop at the time. At first Papa Bebert was stunned. But slowly he began to see, everything, M. Golowin's joke, the terrible thing he had done. He felt weak and faint. His legs gave way under him and he clutched at the chair to keep himself from falling. Blind panic seized him. What should he do—what *could* he do? If he went to the police and confessed, they would throw him into jail. He, who in all his life had never done a dishonest thing, had helped to commit this terrible crime. Unintentionally, yes—but who would believe that? Nobody! His only chance was to say nothing, not a word, not even to Valentine and August. If he did, he was lost! Oh, it was horrible! He groaned feebly, like an old dog in pain.

When M. Salmon came in for his daily shave, Papa Bebert's hand was so unsteady that he cut him twice. Such a thing had never happened before, and M. Salmon went away, very angry. Papa Bebert was too wretched to care. Every few minutes he glanced fearfully at the door, half expecting to see a *gendarme* coming to arrest him. But nothing happened.

The days passed, a week, a month—and still nothing happened. There were other crimes, of course, not only in Paris, but in London, in Berlin and Vienna and Rome. Papa

Bebert followed them all closely. Sometimes he would say to himself :

“ There. Surely. They’ll catch him now ! ”

And then he felt a grim exultation. He wanted justice to be done, wanted to know that M. Golowin was being made to suffer for his wickedness, for the wrong he had done him. But the criminal, if he was caught, always turned out to be somebody else. Finally Papa Bebert gave up hope. Doubtless, he decided, M. Golowin had made his escape and gone away to live in some far-off place : in America perhaps. From what he read in the papers, he gathered there must be more criminals in America than anywhere else.

But he saw M. Golowin once again.

It was nearly a year later, in the middle of winter. Snow had fallen early in the morning, and now it was bitter cold. The little street was deserted. On such a day people preferred to stay indoors, and Papa Bebert had few customers.

He was sitting by the stove smoking and reading the paper, when suddenly the door opened and M. Golowin came in.

Papa Bebert did not recognize him for a moment. He was muffled to the ears in a great coat and his hat was pulled down low, so that you could see little more than his eyes and nose.

“ You don’t remember me ? ” asked M. Golowin.

Papa Bebert jumped to his feet with a strangled cry.

“ Shut up ! ” M. Golowin commanded, grasping hold of his arm. “ I warn you. I’m in no mood for any nonsense.”

“ What do you want ? ” gasped Papa Bebert.

M. Golowin turned and glanced at the door. He seemed very uneasy and nervous, and he had a hunted, frightened look.

“ You’re going to help me. I’ve got to get away from Paris. Do you understand ? ”

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Papa Bebert started, and his heart beat violently against his ribs.

"I might as well tell you," said M. Golowin grimly. "The sooner I get out of here the better. The police are looking for me. I want you to disguise me, as you did the last time."

"The last time?" Papa Bebert stiffened and his eyes grew hard, like bits of flint. "*Ma foi!* Of course. How stupid of me. I remember now. Monsieur means the time when he wanted to play that little joke on his friend."

"Don't take me for a fool," growled M. Golowin. "Come on, now. I'm in a hurry."

"But the police," insisted Papa Bebert. "If, as Monsieur says, the police are looking for him—."

M. Golowin frowned blackly. "I didn't come here to answer your stupid questions. But since you're so anxious to know—I committed a murder last night. What do you think of that?"

Papa Bebert's face turned as white as the snow outside in the street. M. Golowin smiled ironically.

"Frightened, eh? Well, you needn't be. Not if you do what I tell you."

"A murder," said Papa Bebert in a hoarse whisper.

"I dare say you must have read about it," added M. Golowin.

Papa Bebert had. A daring jewel robbery! The criminal while making his escape had shot a night watchman, it was in big black headlines on the front page of the paper he had been reading when M. Golowin entered the shop.

"My first murder," admitted M. Golowin with a shrug. "To tell you the truth, I don't care for that sort of thing. An unpleasant business, no matter how you look at it."

Papa Bebert pulled himself together. His head reeled and

he was terribly frightened, but one thing he knew; never, never would he help M. Golowin to escape. It was as though fate had delivered him into his hands. He wondered what would happen if he ran to the door and cried for help. No, that wouldn't do. M. Golowin, he felt certain, would choke the life out of him.

"Is Monsieur sure the police didn't follow him here?" he asked.

"I hope not," answered M. Golowin—"for both our sakes. Don't forget, my friend. If they catch me, they'll catch you too. Though it's nearly a year ago, don't think for a minute they've forgotten about our little joke."

"But I didn't know," gasped Papa Bebert. "I'll tell the truth. They'll believe me—."

"Don't make me laugh." M. Golowin shrugged again and lighted a cigarette. "What's the good of all this talk? Are you going to help me, or are you not?"

Papa Bebert took a deep, shuddering breath.

"Never!"

"I'm sorry. In that case I'm very much afraid—."

"Monsieur wouldn't dare," said Papa Bebert in a tiny, frightened voice.

But already the cruel fingers were closing around his windpipe.

"Well, how about it?" asked M. Golowin, relaxing his hold after a moment.

Papa Bebert breathed painfully, and his eyes were wide with terror.

"I guess we understand each other," said M. Golowin with satisfaction.

He locked the front door and then he dragged him to the little cubbyhole at the back of the shop, where he let him go.

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It was some time before Papa Bebert recovered sufficiently to ask :

“What is it Monsieur wants me to do?”

“Now you’re being sensible.” M. Golowin smiled quite pleasantly. “I’ll leave it to you. I’m going to cross the border into Italy. Almost any disguise will do. A commercial traveller, maybe. Something respectable.”

Papa Bebert looked around him helplessly. The painted faces, the array of heads, of which he had once been so proud, now seemed like a jury silently condemning him. He was a coward. He felt that if he did this thing, if he helped M. Golowin to escape, he could never forgive himself. Never again could he look Valentine and August in the face. And yet he would have to do it. There was no way out. He burst into tears. Sinking to the floor at M. Golowin’s feet, he embraced his knees. He implored him to have mercy on him. But M. Golowin laughed and told him not to be a fool.

“Even if I wanted to,” pleaded Papa Bebert, “I couldn’t do it. See how my hands are trembling!”

“I’ve given you your choice,” M. Golowin told him. “Either make me a disguise so that I can get away, or you’ll never shave another customer. You’ll never give a pretty girl another hair-wave. They’ll find you lying dead on the floor. Think! Is it worth it? I’m not asking very much of you.”

It was then, all at once, that Papa Bebert had his inspiration. Quickly it took form. It was perfect; it couldn’t fail. Nearly six months had passed since he had run across the picture in a paper and cut it out. Even if M. Golowin had seen it he wouldn’t remember now. Despite his terror, Papa Bebert almost burst out laughing.

“So Monsieur is going to Italy,” he said.

"What's that got to do with it?" M. Golowin was getting very impatient.

"Nothing," admitted Papa Bebert. "Nothing at all. I was just thinking. A commercial traveller—no, I think I can do better than that. Surely Monsieur would want something more original."

"Suit yourself. Anything you like."

"How about an old Italian lady?"

"Why not?" said M. Golowin with a grin.

Papa Bebert was watching him as a cat watches a mouse. He nearly gave himself away, but quickly he added:

"An old Italian lady returning home after a trip to Paris. I could guarantee a beautiful job, Monsieur. A masterpiece!"

"How long will it take you?" asked M. Golowin.

"Not long at all. I have a picture of an old Italian lady somewhere. I can copy that. I'll have Monsieur out of here inside of an hour."

And Papa Bebert kept his word. In less than an hour M. Golowin was no more, and in front of the mirror stood a sweet-faced old lady. She looked rather incongruous in M. Golowin's overcoat and she wore a pair of stout boots.

"But I know a secondhand dealer just around the corner from here," she told Papa Bebert, "where I can get clothes and everything else I need. I'm as good as in Italy right now."

When she left the shop Papa Bebert came to the door with her. Anyone watching them would have taken them for old friends. But there was no one. Not even a beggar looking for shelter on that wintry day; not even a stray cat.

"Good-bye," said the old lady, looking very pleased with herself. "Until we meet again."

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"Good-bye," answered Papa Bebert, and with a grim little smile he added: "*Bon voyage!*"

The old Italian lady had a very pleasant journey as far as the border. According to the passport, her name was Maria Spirelli, and she explained that she was returning home from a trip to Paris where she had gone to visit her married daughter. The customs inspection didn't take more than a few minutes.

Everything was all right until the old lady was about to get on her train, and then the police came and arrested her.

She couldn't understand this at all. She was beside herself, and when the police took her away she shrieked and cursed, in a most unladylike fashion.

Afterwards, the police pulled off her wig and rubbed the make-up from her face, and asked themselves if such a thing could be possible.

Papa Bebert read all about the trial. It was on the front page of every newspaper in Europe. A sensation!

People still talk about it—the strange case of the old Italian lady, who murdered her husband, cut up his body and shipped it away in a trunk. But strangest of all was that the old lady should turn out to be a man. In fact, or in fiction, was there ever a situation more astounding, more fantastic? The police couldn't understand why he was crazy enough to return to Italy. He must have read in the papers that his crime was discovered, must have seen the old lady's picture—the picture Papa Bebert cut out and then used so successfully as an inspiration for M. Golowin's disguise.

As far as M. Golowin was concerned, it didn't make much difference. In France he would have gone to the guillotine. And in Italy, where there is no death penalty, they sent him to prison for life, which was almost as bad.

Anyway, Papa Bebert never saw him again.

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*Quinette's crime*¹

[Continued from our January Issue]

THE worst of it was that it was equally urgent for him to invent a plausible story about the trunk. The first question the police would ask him, if they came in now, or if they were waiting for him on his return, would be: "You have such-and-such a trunk here? Good. Why?"

Quinette had, indeed, thought about the answer during these last few days; but he had not put any hard thinking into it. He had been lazy, like a man awaiting inspiration. Besides, the most ingenious story he could think of would be worthless in so far as it was not confirmed by Leheudry, who would be interrogated separately. Therefore he must go and see Leheudry as soon as possible and teach him his lesson.

But already he had pushed the trunk into the kitchen, opened it wide, and cleared the table so that he could put all the contents on it one by one. He cleared his throat. He blinked his eyes several times, vigorously. With a twist of his shoulders he freed his neck as much as he could from the encumbrance of his clothes. He sought out in the depths of his being every disposable atom of attention. He effected,

¹ From *Men of Good Will* by Jules Romains. Translated from the French by Warre B. Wells. (Lovat Dickson, *Large Crown 8vo.*, 8s. 6d. net)

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in the mechanism of his mind, that kind of change of speed which makes every one of the senses stand out sharply and profit on its own account, so to speak, by a distinct reasoning faculty, while the inner mind lights up second by second, like a row of footlights.

An hour later he was still keyed up, ready to crouch and spring. But he no longer had a trace of anxiety of the kind that depresses you. All his fear had become offensive.

The surviving contents of the trunk were spread over the table. The smallest object had undergone a rigorous examination, like those fine metallurgical products whose calibre, grain, ring, and elasticity are verified by a dozen testing instruments. The pairs of socks, acquired "at snatchers' fair," had gone into the fire, and so had a pillow-case, a woman's bonnet, and a pair of slippers of doubtful sex, which certainly had nothing to do with the crime in the rue Dailloud, but might have led to questions.

The last ashes had crumbled in the stove. Quinette defied any inquirers in advance.

"Yes, gentlemen, this trunk belongs to a man called Augustin Leheudry, whom I employ from time to time to run errands or to pick up books and bindings for me at second-hand shops. How did I get to know him? Because he called on me one day and asked me if I could give him work. Why have I got his trunk? Because he asked me to take care of it for him for a week or so, telling me that he was moving, and that he would be without any fixed address until he found a place that suited him. He is suspected of the crime which was committed near here? That surprises me very much."

It was at this moment that he heard somebody trying the street door. He trembled, but without losing his head in the least. "It's a customer. I won't open the door."

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Nevertheless he hastily stuffed everything back into the trunk and pushed it behind the cretonne curtain in his back shop again. Then he was seized with curiosity to know who was there.

As he made his stealthy way towards the door, it occurred to him that the provisional story which he had just invented made the mistake of not being in accordance with his visit to the hotel in the rue du Château and with what he had said there.

“I’ll arrange about that.”

For he was sure, now, that he would have time to “arrange about that.” It was a childish fear that had led him to believe that the police might drop upon him so suddenly.

“They’re not such geniuses as all that.”

Thereupon he had opened the door to Juliette Ezzelin.

* * *

After Juliette had gone; the bookbinder spent a quarter of an hour putting Leheudry’s trunk in order again. Then he got ready to go out.

A thought occurred to him—that of the piece of cotton-wool in the match-box, at the very back of his till. There was no chance of the police making a search during his absence. Probably it would not even be legal; and, anyway, who would think of opening that match-box? But, for the sake of his own security of mind, he had to tell himself that he was leaving behind him a place purged of any indication, sterilised against any test. He took the box and slipped it into a waistcoat-pocket.

When he reached the boulevard Garibaldi, he hesitated for a moment over the means of transportation which he should employ. But he was not long in coming to the conclusion that speed was more important than any pre-

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cautions. He hailed a taxi and gave as the address : " Hotel de Ville Bazaar." It was five past ten.

Quinette stopped the taxi at the corner of the rue du Temple and made sure that the driver saw him entering the bazaar. He walked through it diagonally and came out in the rue de la Verrerie, near the corner of the rue des Archives. The crowd of women shopping at the ground-floor counters was already dense.

He turned left along the rue de la Verrerie, followed the rue du Renard and the rue du Cloître-Saint-Merri, and approached the rue Taillepain on the side where it ends at the church.

He knocked at Leheudry's door. No reply. He knocked louder. Still no reply.

" Hallo, this looks bad ! I hope to goodness that idiot hasn't happened to read the paper and lost his head ! He's quite capable of not coming back here. How am I going to find him . . . before the others do ? "

He hesitated. He stepped out into the little court, cautiously. Suddenly he saw the old landlady. He had already met her once, but in the dark, and so fugitively that he thought she had not noticed him.

" Oh, are you looking for—— ? . . . He's just gone out ; yes, he's just gone out."

" Oh, it doesn't matter."

He asked himself whether he ought to question her.

" You're a friend of his, aren't you ? "

" " A friend of his ' . . . I don't like the sound of that much," Quinette said to himself.

" I recognised you because of your beard."

Quinette, very much annoyed, tugged at that beard of his, as though he could make it disappear or change the shape of it by kneading it with his hand.

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"He hasn't been up very long. He's gone to get his coffee somewhere about here. Somewhere in the rue Rambuteau, I think."

"You don't know just where?"

"No. No, I don't."

"How long has he been gone?"

"Five or ten minutes. If you had been a little earlier, you would have caught him."

"I made a mistake," thought Quinette, "in coming all that way through the bazaar. Once more, what matters to-day is speed—not taking little precautions."

"But he's bound to come back," the old woman continued. "He told me that he would be back—perhaps so that I would tell you, in case. Come and wait in my room if you like. I could let you sit in his own room—I have the key. . . ."

"He's left his key with her! What a fool the man is! I've got myself tied up with an absolute imbecile."

". . . But I know he doesn't like anybody to go into his room when he isn't there."

"That's it! He leaves her his key! He manages to give her the idea that he has things in his room that he wouldn't want seen!"

"Listen, madame. If I thought I could find the café where he is, that would suit me much better. You have no idea at all?"

"It might be at the corner of the rue Rambuteau and the rue Beaubourg. I know that he goes there sometimes."

"Good. I'll try there. In any case, if he comes back, tell him to wait for me. Tell him not to stir. Tell him that I've found a job for him, and that it is very urgent. I shall be back in a quarter of an hour at the most."

"All this is rather my own fault. I have been slack, and

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not stern enough with him. In the first place, it was understood from the very first day that I was to find another hiding-place for him—that he was to get away from here. He wanted to stay until to-morrow. So as not to sacrifice the week's rent. A miserable reason. I agreed to that. There's no getting away from the fact that I agreed to that. What am I to call it? Weakness of mind. Weakness of will. A fine example of the way to make mistakes—the way you get caught.

"I simply must find him. It's impossible, in any case, for me to wash my hands of him. Leheudry free in his movements, independent of me: a mortal danger. Safety rule: hold on to him. I could afford to let him go only if he disappeared altogether. If, for example, this morning, after reading the paper, he had gone and thrown himself into the Seine."

He reflected.

"That would be one solution. But a poor one. No, I shouldn't like him to have thrown himself into the Seine."

Here a fact which he had not yet realised dawned upon him.

"But then . . . is this going to last all my life? Is it not just to-day, or just this week, that I have to keep him out of their hands, but for the whole of my life? Or the whole of his life? There is some statue of limitation, I believe, but God only knows after how many years it applies. In practice, it is for the whole of his life. As long as he lives, I have to keep him in tutelage? I have to watch him? I have to prevent him from making a fool of himself? What a frightful idea! I had never thought of that."

It gave him such a sense of consternation that he felt as though he had a diver's helmet on his head, and the sweat ran all down the front of his bald skull.

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But it cost him so much to admit such an error in his calculations that he soon found sufficient strength of mind to brush this idea aside, or at least to cast a preliminary doubt upon it.

“I’m losing my head too soon. There must be something to be done. I shall have time to think about all that later. What matters at the moment is to get out of the scrape we are in now. Once a case is ‘closed’ . . .”

Quinette approached the café.

He was still ten yards away from it when he saw Leheudry standing at the counter, with a glass in front of him, and talking to the other customers—talking, indeed, with some animation, perorating.

“He’s mad—stark, staring mad! What the devil is he talking to them about?”

Quinette wanted to attract Leheudry’s attention without entering the café. But Leheudry was one of those fellows with feeble eyes who can never rise to the height of an emergency. He was not thinking about Quinette. He was thinking, alas, about whatever he was saying.

What was the best thing to do? Wait at the corner, or go into the café and be done with it? One way or the other, the risk of being noticed, and therefore recognised afterwards, was about the same.

Having thought it over, Quinette went into the café, but by the door furthest away from the counter. He went and sat down at a table in a corner. If Leheudry turned his head a little, he was bound to see him.

The proprietor, standing behind the counter, noticed the new customer. He shouted to the waiter: “Emile!” and pointed to the corner of the room where Quinette was sitting. Leheudry automatically followed the gesture with

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his eyes. He gave a slight start of surprise and stopped talking, looking rather sheepish ; but he controlled himself well enough for the people around him not to notice anything.

" So that's over ! " sighed Quinette ; " and not so bad, either."

He ordered coffee, which he paid for at once. He drank it rapidly. Then he got up, pushing back his chair noisily, with a slight cough. Anyway, Leheudry had not taken his eyes off him.

Once outside, Quinette walked slowly. Before he left the corner, he had made sure that Leheudry was getting ready to follow him.

" Where shall we go ? " the bookbinder pondered. " His place ? That would be the simplest thing. But that old woman annoys me. I would rather she did not see me again. There's the church. . . . Well, why not the church ? "

This idea appealed to him because it was out of the ordinary. It was a pretty sound idea, too. It was certainly not in churches that criminals had their secret meetings as a rule—for all kinds of reasons, among which superstitious fear was probably not the least—and it was certainly not in the recesses of Saint-Merri's that the police were going to look this morning for the author of the crime in the rue Dailloud.

" Well, have you read the papers ? "

" I ? No. . . . Why, has anything happened ? "

" Only that the business was found out last night, that's all."

" Oh, that's terrible ! It was bound to happen. I'm done for."

" No, you're not."

" Have they got any clue ? "

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"Nothing about one yet. There's something that rather annoyed me—the fact that I had to learn all this from the papers. To think that you weren't prepared to tell me all about it—me! It's outrageous!"

"It wasn't so much that I wanted to hide anything from you. . . ."

"Don't play the fool with me."

"It wasn't. I assure you it wasn't. But it seemed to me as though it would be like making a confession. And once you make a confession, your goose is cooked."

"Well, whether that's true or not, your reason doesn't hold good any longer. So I hope you will be good enough to reply categorically to everything I ask you."

"I promise you I will."

"Because if you don't, I'm done with you."

"I promise you. But tell me—you're sure they haven't got a clue?"

"Speak lower. You never take care what you're doing. . . . You don't suppose they are going to shout it on the house-tops if they have, do you? . . . You weren't lying to me when you swore to me that they had nothing against you?"

"Oh, no. I swear they haven't."

"All right. Another essential point. How did you come to meet that woman?"

"That's easily explained. Six months ago I was trying to sell some silver spoons and forks. . . ."

"Oh, where did you get them from?"

"Oh, I got them honestly. A pal of mine, who used to work in an hotel, offered them to me one day. Don't ask me where he got them from! At that time I had money, so I bought them from him—cheap, too. Later on I wanted to raise some money. I thought of selling them again. The

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fellow to whom I took them—a little jeweller—said : ‘Nothing doing.’ Perhaps he was suspicious of me. But I kept on at him. Then he said to me : ‘Go to Ma ame So-and-so’—giving me the address—‘she buys that sort of thing sometimes.’ So there it was. I had a look at her little nest and what she had inside it. At the moment it didn’t suggest anything to me. But, later on, it came back into my head.”

“Then you are not well known at the house? The neighbours haven’t noticed you? They don’t know you by sight?”

“Not they!”

“The night in question—at what time did you go there? . . . Well? . . .”

Leheudry seemed to be seized with distrust again.

“Well, it must have been about four o’clock, or half-past four.”

“As early as that?”

“Yes.”

“And you had just left when you came to me?”

“Yes.”

“Why did it take all that time?”

“Because I went back.”

“Went back? Whatever for?”

“I hadn’t been able to find the money. I’d left with a few trinkets, a bit of plate. It wasn’t much. I said to myself : ‘This is too silly’——”

“But—the woman, all this time?”

“She hadn’t stirred.”

“Oh! She was already——”

“No.”

“What? Hadn’t you——?”

“Only to stun her.”

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"What with?"

"A piece of lead rolled up in a rag."

"Which you had brought with you?"

"Yes. It's a gadget you use in printing-offices. I might have been searched. There was nothing odd about my having that on me."

"I don't understand. When did you hit her?"

"Right at the beginning."

"But the blood?"

"That—that was at the end. When I went away, the second time. All at once I saw her coming for me. She had come to herself. She seized me by the arm. You can guess how scared I was."

"The paper says that they found a—knife."

"Yes, I threw it down. I had picked it up just as it came to hand, when I lost my head."

"You hadn't got it in your pocket?"

"No, I tell you! It was lying there on a table, with the spoons and forks and the rest. Of course, I had made a mistake. I hadn't got my piece of lead ready any longer."

"Where was it?"

"I must have left it beside the bed."

"And there it stayed?"

"I suppose so."

"Oh, that's a very bad business! It will be found. And, as it forms part of the tools of your trade, it will show them where to start looking."

"No, I'm wrong. I remember now that I put it down in the middle of a whole litter of things—glass jars, ink-wells, paper-weights . . . I even said to myself that a jar or a paper-weight would have done just as well—that it wasn't worth while to have brought it along with me. That's what makes

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me think of it now. Tell me, they didn't find her in her bed, did they ? ”

“ No. Near the door, at the foot of the stairs.”

“ That's all right, then. They won't think of going and looking beside the bed.”

“ But with the rag round it—that will attract attention.”

“ The rag wasn't there any more. I know—I started stuffing it into her mouth, in case she should scream. But there wasn't any need.”

“ There wasn't any noise at all ? ”

“ At that time ? Scarcely any. When I went back, I knocked over a stand with a lot of knick-knacks on it.”

“ Which were broken ? ”

“ I didn't notice.”

“ There's another pointer. They will think that there was a struggle beside the bed.”

“ Or aren't they more likely to say that it was the old woman who knocked the stand over when she got out of bed in a hurry to run after me ? ”

“ Yes, that's true. . . . But at the end, at the foot of the stairs—wasn't there any noise ? Didn't she scream ? ”

“ I don't think so. But there I'm not so sure, because I had lost my head, as they say.”

A strong smell of incense was wafted about. Perhaps they were filling censers in the sacristy.

“ That smells like a burial,” said the printer. “ I don't like that stuff.”

“ Then, when you went back, the second time—how long was it after the first time ? ”

“ Barely half an hour.”

“ A funny way of going about it ! And the second time you finally unearthed the—— ? ”

“ Well, I found a little, anyway.”

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"What did you do with it? . . . Why don't you answer?
. . . You don't want to tell me?"

"I kept some of it myself."

"But what about the rest?"

Leheudry did not reply. He shook his head, knitted his brow, and half-opened his mouth.

* * *

"You're a fool. You seem to think that, if I question you about money and so on, it's because I want to do you out of it. Idiot! Even now you don't realise that by hiding things from me you make everything I take the trouble to do for you useless. Still, your position is clear enough. If I drop you, you know how you will drop, don't you? Body one way, and head the other, into the basket."

The other turned pale. The hollows under his eyes seemed to spread, as though acid were eating them. He stammered:

"Don't say that! Don't say that!"

"I've said it now. I'm not going to waste my time pointing out to you all the mistakes you have made from the very beginning. Go on in the same way, and that's how you will end. If they had you on their records, you would be arrested this very night. Thanks to your playing the ass, you will be within the next three days."

"My playing the ass?" said the other, as though the word suddenly offended him. "I'm not such an ass as all that, perhaps."

"I'm going to show you that you are just as big an ass as you look. The loot—either it's at your place, or it's somewhere else. If you have left it in your room, however well hidden you may think it is, your landlady can find it any time she likes, and you know what will happen then.

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If it is somewhere else, that means you have entrusted it to somebody. Well, it's your life that you have entrusted to this somebody. Make no mistake about that."

"I trusted you, didn't I? I suppose there are other people in the world to be trusted besides you, aren't there?"

"That's ridiculous reasoning. It was a miracle that the man whose hands you fell into happened to be myself. Don't count on two miracles. Look here, I'll tell you myself where the loot is. It's at your mistress's. Yes, the woman you told me about—the one who came to see you the evening before you did the job."

Leheudry bent his head. He was full of admiration, of anxiety, of animosity.

"You see," Quinette went on, with bitter satisfaction, "it doesn't take long to see through you. You are the classic criminal. You run true to form. Any beginner in detective work could rope you in."

He flung his arms wide open.

"What's the use? There is simply nothing more to be done. Your mistress will just make a mouthful of it. She is probably selling it on the Quai des Orfèvres already. As for me, my duty to myself is to get out of it the best way I can. . . . Of course, I have a way out . . . go and see my old chiefs . . . and tell them . . . well, something like the truth, so far as that goes—that I took pity on you . . . that I had some sort of romantic idea of helping you to get away, by making use of my knowledge of their methods . . . but that you're not worth helping, after all, and that I'm sorry I ever tried."

"You wouldn't do that!"

"They would give me a fine dressing-down, of course, but that would be all. An old colleague of theirs is still a colleague, whatever happens." (Quinette was playing

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his part without the least effort—so much so that he felt homesick for this past which might have been his own.)

“You wouldn’t do that! . . .”

Leheudry, from being violent, almost threatening, turned plaintive again.

“You’ve got it all wrong. This girl of mine doesn’t know anything about it. She hasn’t got the parcel. She put it in her safe without opening it.”

“What safe?”

“She has a safe at the bank—a safe-deposit, you know. It has a secret combination.”

“Your mistress has a safe at the bank? What’s this yarn you’re trying to tell me?”

“Well, it isn’t exactly at an ordinary bank. It’s at the Savings Bank, in the rue Coq-Héron. Only a few yards away from the Banque de France. It comes to the same thing. She has a pass-book; and, along with her pass-book, she rents a safe-deposit for eighteen francs a year. It isn’t very dear, is it?”

“But . . . what kind of woman is she, eh?”

“Not what you think. Oh, no—nothing like that. She’s a business woman. She has a shop.”

“Married?”

“Yes. And well married, too.”

“She is, eh? And you told me that you had been hard up, almost at your wits’ end, more than once. . . .”

“I didn’t say at my wits’ end.”

“All right; but absolutely at the end of your resources. And this woman, well off as she is—didn’t she help you?”

“No. . . . I haven’t known her long enough. It would have destroyed her illusions about me. I may as well tell you that I passed myself off with her as being better than I am. I didn’t tell her that I was a poor devil of a printer.

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She takes me for a man of good birth. I told her that I was an engineer."

"And she believed you?"

"Oh—well—she's young. . . . Besides, I didn't tell her that I was an engineer with a Polytechnic degree—not at all—just an engineer—an ordinary engineer, you know."

"But when she came to see you in your room in the rue du Château?"

"I was supposed to be out of a job. She knows that it's hard for engineers to find a place. I had broken with my family and wasn't getting anything at all from them. And then, she thinks I'm only twenty-six."

"She seems a simple-minded young person, this lady friend of yours! But to go back to the safe?"

"Here's how it is. I told her that it was jewellery, family papers . . . and money that didn't belong to me . . . the hold sacred things I had . . . that people wanted to get most of these papers, to prevent me from coming into an inheritance. So that if she could put it in her safe for me, until I had a place of my own or could get a safe of my own . . ."

"She won't want to see what's inside?"

"I'd be ready to put my hand in the fire if she does. She would think she was doing me an injury. Besides, what would she find if she did? Just a few trinkets, and a little bit of plate. . . ."

"And money?"

"Yes."

"In what form?"

"Notes, mostly; and a few rolls of twenty-franc pieces. One hundred-franc piece, three fifty-franc, and one forty-franc."

"One forty-franc? That's very rare."

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"I know it is. It's something I wouldn't part with."

"But what about family papers?"

"Well, there are some. I put in some old letters that I had from my father to my mother. I'm an illegitimate son. My father was quite a gentleman. If she looks at them, she will say to herself that they may be intended for proof in connection with a question of paternity. Besides, as the letters are very well written, on fine paper and all that, they will go to show her that I wasn't lying about my family."

"But what about her husband? Suppose he took it into his head to pay a visit to this safe-deposit? . . ."

"No. He never goes there. In any case, the pass-book is in the name of the girl . . ."

". . . Whom you have seen again, therefore, in spite of all your promises. How often have you seen her?"

"Just that once, when I gave her the parcel."

"You are lying."

"And another time, just accidentally—but that doesn't count. Twice at the most. I swear it."

"You didn't tell her anything about this—business? Nothing at all?"

"No, nothing at all."

"Hum!"

"No, I didn't, I tell you. Put yourself in my place. If she were just an ordinary bitch or anybody's fancy, I might have let myself go. But with a woman like her? I should have given her a horror of me. She was crazy about me. No. I didn't even have to resist the temptation to tell her. She is the last person in the world to whom I would confess anything of the kind. Because I'm in love with her. Just you get that into your head."

Quinette meditated. Then he said :

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"Well, then, I simply don't understand."

"What don't you understand?"

"Your—your action the other night. If the love that you say you have for this woman was as deep as you make out, it ought to have prevented you from doing such a thing. Obviously."

Leheudry seemed very much disconcerted by what Quinette had said. He opened his eyes wide and then blinked his lids, like a child to whom a schoolmaster has just put a question up to the standard of the next class above. Finally, as though by way of excuse, he said :

"I don't see the connection."

"Unless it was that you wanted to lay hands on some money so that you could play your part as a gentleman better in this woman's eyes?"

"Perhaps that was it . . ." the printer conceded politely. But then he went on hastily :

"Still, I don't think it was. No. That wasn't what I had in my mind at all."

"Anyhow, it doesn't matter much. What does matter is that this woman is in possession—she may not know it, but still she is in possession—of formal proof of your guilt ; and, besides that, you go on seeing her at a time when you ought not to let anybody see you at all."

Quinette paused ; then, in the same authoritative tone, he continued :

"You will give me the name and address of this woman."

"But——"

"I'm not going to have any discussion about it. I don't know what I am going to do yet. I must think about it. In any case, I must form my own opinion about her."

"What ? . . . Do you mean you're going to see her?"

"I'm not sure. Perhaps I shall find out what I can about

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her first. I haven't any more interest than you in trying to rush things. What's her name ? ”

“ Sophie Parent.”

“ And her address ? ”

“ 31 rue Vandamme—it's a street off the rue de la Gaîté.”

“ A shop, is it ? ”

“ Yes, stationery and haberdashery.”

“ Is her husband in the business, too ? ”

“ No. He's got a job.”

“ Oh, he has, eh ? I understand things a little better now.”

“ I met her in connection with orders for visiting-cards, which she received from her customers. Then she got the shop where I was working to print them for her.”

“ But in that case she must have known that you were a working printer. What's all this you've been telling me ? ”

“ No, she didn't. It's too long a story to tell you. When she came to call on my boss, I saw her ; but she didn't see me. Because of the way the place was arranged. I fell in love with her from that moment. But, of course, she didn't know anything about it.”

“ All right. You can tell me the story of your love-affair later on. Oh, there's one point. You kept a certain amount of money yourself. Was it much ? ”

“ No.”

“ For a man in your position, you don't seem to be too much of a spendthrift. It's one of the few merits you have. How much have you got left ? ”

“ Less than a thousand francs.”

“ There's a good deal more in that safe you're talking about ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Twenty times more ? ”

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"Oh, no!"

"Ten times more?"

"Thereabouts."

"Let's say fifteen thousand at least. I must know just how much it is. As for the trinkets and the other things of any value, of course, don't attempt to sell or get anybody to sell a single one for you. Or you will be signing your death-warrant. Do you understand?"

"What am I to do with them?"

"We'll see about that. You have rather too much money on you. That's a bad thing from every point of view. You ought not to keep more than a couple of hundred francs, say, and let me keep the rest for you. I'll give it back to you just as you need it. . . . Well? . . . You don't think I want to swindle you out of it, do you?"

"No," said Leheudry, tamely enough. "Besides, it's only fair that you should make something out of all the trouble you are taking."

"There's no question of that!"

"The only thing is that two hundred francs won't see me very far."

"You will be so much the less tempted to indulge in expenditure out of the ordinary. Exactly what we want to aim at is giving anybody with whom you come into contact the impression that you are living from hand to mouth."

"That may be. But it was hardly worth while running such a risk, if I've got to go without everything."

"You can have your fun later on, when the danger is past. For the moment, we're living under martial law. Come on, hand it over. Seven hundred-franc notes. Seven hundred francs. Good. I'll write it down in my note-book here, so that I won't forget—without your name, of course.

* * *

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"Suppose I go and take a turn in the direction of that hovel?" He refused to recognise how much enthusiasm there was in this desire of his.

"The urge—by proxy—to return to the scene of the crime? Not at all. Nothing to do with it. I have a hard struggle to carry on against the police. My own investigation must be as thorough as that of the other side—so that I shall know how to meet them."

Quinette looked at the swing gate, and the passage which ran between the two low houses, at right angles to the street. The end of the passage seemed to be blocked by a wall; but there must be an outlet, to the left, which presumably led into that courtyard which the papers mentioned.

Of the two low houses, the one to the left showed a blind wall to the passage. But the one to the right opened into it through a door and window on the ground floor, and two windows on the first floor. The windows on the first floor had their shutters closed.

The bookbinder turned round. The fruit-shop into which he had gone the other day and where he had received such a shock—"When I picked him up, he was still breathing"—was directly opposite.

"From that shop, and from the windows on the street, people can see me standing here and looking about. My curiosity explains itself. They will merely think that I have read the papers, the same as themselves. But there must be nothing unusual about the way I behave. The air of a casual sightseer. Almost a superior smile."

He decided it was wise to cross the road. He walked boldly into the fruit-shop. The proprietor was emptying a bag of white kidney-beans into a bin.

"Tell me, was it opposite here that the crime was committed?"

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"So they say."

"It's a queer business. But I don't see this hovel that the papers talk about."

"It's at the back, round a bend, so they say."

"I live in the neighbourhood, but I had never even noticed that passage between the two houses."

"I have, because we've got it right in front of us all day long. But I've never set foot in it, further than the concierge's place."

"Oh, there's a concierge, is there?"

"Yes, in the little house on the right."

"It's a queer business. I should like to ask the concierge if she knows the details of it."

"She's an old fool. I shall be surprised if she tells you anything interesting. But you can always try."

Emboldened by this first step, Quinette crossed the street again, opened the gate, and found "Concierge" written in little black letters over a tumbledown door.

"Excuse me, madame. Hope I'm not disturbing you. I am a neighbour of yours. The bookbinder down the street, you know. I've just seen the papers. You must have had a terrible shock."

The concierge was a little old woman, very thin, very bent, with a hooked nose, and eyes that were still keen. She had a metallic voice, whose volume was surprising.

"You belong about here? So you do. I think I've seen you passing, you and that beard of yours."

She looked at him closely, not in too friendly a way.

"An old fool?" Quinette said to himself. "Nothing of the kind. Very wide awake, on the contrary. I should not have come."

He found some difficulty in continuing the conversation; but he made an effort.

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"I live in a rather isolated little house, too. Rather like this one of yours. I can tell you it made a nasty impression on me. Made me say to myself all at once that one is at the mercy of any burglar. I thought the neighbourhood was safer than that. Of course, when you have lived in a neighbourhood for a long time, you get to think that it is not like others. Makes you ask yourself, too, whether the police know their business, doesn't it, madame? Considering that we count on them to protect us! I suppose they really did look into things, anyway?"

"They've sealed the place up."

"Oh, have they? Of course they questioned the neighbours?"

"They did what had to be done. It's nothing to do with me."

"How do you expect me to have heard anything, as far away as I am? To start with, I'm hard of hearing; and it happens to be in the left ear. And when I sleep—not that I sleep much; I don't even know whether I was asleep at the time—but anyway, when you are in the habit of sleeping on your right side, you're not going to change at my time of life; and naturally you have your ear buried in the pillow. I can't stay awake day and night."

"I didn't mean you. I was talking about the immediate neighbours, if there are any."

"Well, now I do remember a curious thing, come to think of it. But I can't recall whether it happened before Wednesday or Thursday. According to them, the crime was committed on Sunday or Monday. It upset me, all the same. I was here, in my own house. It was about nine or ten o'clock."

"At night?"

"No, in the morning. So far as I remember, I was

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coming back from a refuse dump that I have at the back. I haven't a right to it, strictly speaking. Because this house is meant for letting, too. The upstairs rooms. And the refuse dump goes with them. They aren't let at the moment. That's why the shutters are closed. I'm more to myself, that's one thing. But, so far as safety goes, I run more risks being alone like this, at my age."

"What were you saying happened to you?"

"Yes, I was coming back, and I saw—— Look at that wall behind you. That's right. Step back a little. A little more. Now, imagine yourself stuck right up against the wall. I must tell you that I wasn't here, on my door-step. No, I had just gone into my room. And I wasn't thinking of looking out. Not to speak of the curtains. But, anyway, I caught sight of this man stuck right up against the wall. Gave me quite a turn. I went to the window very quietly. I pulled back the curtain, just a tiny bit. I don't know whether he saw me or didn't see me. Anyway, he took himself off."

"It's turning pale that I have to be afraid of," thought Quinette. He said to himself, too, that his voice was going to tremble. But what affected it was less his anxiety than his overdone effort to speak naturally.

"You think that it was—the man who did the deed?"

"For the moment, as I say, it gave me quite a turn. But, still, it was broad daylight. People in the street. Nobody had said a word to me about what had happened. I ought to have thought about the good woman. In fact, I must have thought about her. But so many funny people called on her."

"Would you recognise him?"

"I might."

"Did you tell the police about him?"

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"No. Because I didn't think of it then. But I'll tell them now."

"They will ask you why you didn't tell them before. They will make trouble for you about it."

"Well, let them! I'm not afraid of them, I'm not. So long as one has an easy conscience. They're more likely to say that it's got nothing to do with it. Because it was daylight. They may think it has, though, all the same. Because they certainly told me to pay attention to the people who came here. They explained to me that often fellows who have done something like that try to come back, or send somebody. So, if it really was Sunday or thereabouts when the crime was committed, perhaps he had come back to have a look."

"What was he like?"

"It's difficult to say, offhand. But if they brought him here and put him up against the wall for me, by way of reconstructing the crime, I think I could very well say whether it was he or not."

"Well, I'm sorry for you. You're only at the beginning of your troubles. It's one of those cases where one may be well pleased not to have seen anything or heard anything. And now I must be getting back to my shop. I like having a talk; but it doesn't get the work done."

"Wouldn't you like me to show you the scene of the crime, from the outside? Of course we can't get inside."

Amid his conflicting impulses Quinette hesitated until his head nearly swam.

"Come along. I'll just close my door. You can easily spare a minute."

When they reached the courtyard, to the left of the passage, the first thing he tried to grasp, to estimate, was the isolation

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of the hovel, its distance from its surroundings, the silence that reigned around it, the concentric circles of safety and danger, the desirability of its situation as a scene of crime.

"He didn't mislead me very much. The nearest neighbour is fifteen yards away. Except for that wall with one opening, which doesn't count. A stable wall. It is quite possible that nobody heard the stand being knocked over."

The old woman was looking at him as though she expected some compliment from him about the place she was exhibiting to him.

"On the whole," he said, "it's not a bad spot. Your good woman had found a quiet corner. Only too quiet."

"The place is going to be vacant," replied the old woman.

He pulled out his watch in pretended alarm.

"Hallo, past midday. And here I am amusing myself like a child with a toy."

He put his watch back; then, without thinking what he was doing, he fumbled with his thumb and first finger in the lower left-hand pocket of his waistcoat. He found something unusual there: a box of matches. Just as he was going to pull it out, he remembered. "The cotton-wool." A shiver, which was not altogether disagreeable crept over the skin of his skull.

(To be continued)

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"They will ask you why you didn't tell them before. They will make trouble for you about it."

"Well, let them! I'm not afraid of them, I'm not. So long as one has an easy conscience. They're more likely to say that it's got nothing to do with it. Because it was daylight. They may think it has, though, all the same. Because they certainly told me to pay attention to the people who came here. They explained to me that often fellows who have done something like that try to come back, or send somebody. So, if it really was Sunday or thereabouts when the crime was committed, perhaps he had come back to have a look."

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He pulled out his watch in pretended alarm.

"Hallo, past midday. And here I am amusing myself like a child with a toy."

He put his watch back; then, without thinking what he was doing, he fumbled with his thumb and first finger in the lower left-hand pocket of his waistcoat. He found something unusual there: a box of matches. Just as he was going to pull it out, he remembered. "The cotton-wool." A shiver, which was not altogether disagreeable crept over the skin of his skull.

(To be continued)

Our Contributors

H. E. BATES is twenty-eight. His first novel, *The Two Sisters*, was published, with a preface by Edward Garnett, when he was twenty. Since that time he has published three other novels and more than seventy short stories. His work is quieter and more lyrical in tone than that of most of his contemporaries and he is especially devoted to the very short sketch, the prose-poem, a form which has found very little favour in England, though he is almost as fond of the long-short story, of which *The Waterfall* is an example. His stories are contained in three volumes: *Day's End*, *Seven Tales* and *Alexander* and *The Black Boxer*, to which will shortly be added a fourth, *The Woman who Had Imagination*, in which the best of his most recent work is included.

GEORGE MANNING-SANDERS is the author of three novels—*Drum and Monkey*, *The Burnt Man*, and *Little Comfort*—and of a quantity of short stories. He is the husband of Ruth Manning-Sanders, the poet and novelist, and father of Joan Manning-Sanders, the young artist. For years, in order that he might be free to live his own life, he had no home but a caravan, but now lives in a fishing hamlet at Land's End, Cornwall, in a thatched cottage reconstructed from a ruin four hundred years old. Has many good friends amongst the fishermen, a hardy, independent and humour-loving remnant of unspoilt Cornwall. Most of his stories are based on these people and their activities along the stretch of harbourless rocky coast.

HENRY HANDEL RICHARDSON has lived for many years now in London; but was born in Melbourne, and there went to the school described in *The Getting of Wisdom*: a book that gave such offence to the authorities concerned that when, on a subsequent visit to Melbourne,

she wished to go over her old school, she was refused admission, and had to content herself with peeping at it through the palings. Though obliged by her parents to study music, she always wanted to be a writer ; and as soon as she had finished her course at the Leipzig Conservatorium, she had her way, and began *Maurice Guest*. Very early she made up her mind to write a "real" book about Australia, as a counterblast to the many romantic and fantastic tales that existed. That *The Fortunes of Richard Mabony* took her so long to complete was owing partly to ill-health, partly to the fact that the first volume called for an enormous amount of historical research and reconstruction, only the period covered by *Ultima Thule* coming to some extent within her own ken. As a change and relaxation, after concluding the *Trilogy*, she made her first experiments in the short-story form.

JAMES STERN is a young Irish writer. After five years of Eton and Sandhurst, he spent the following five years working chiefly on cattle farms (in England and South Africa) and in Banks (in London, Berlin and Frankfurt/Main). In 1932 he published *The Heartless Land*, a book of grim stories dealing with the lives of white men and women amongst the natives of Southern Rhodesia. He has since written a number of stories concerning children, and is at present working on a long novel.

FRITIOF NILSSON, more popularly known as The Pirate, was born thirty-eight years ago in Vollsjö, a little village in South Sweden, near the Baltic. He was educated at the University of Lund, and practised law for a dozen years. The overwhelming success in Sweden a year ago of his first novel, *Bombi Bitt*, enabled him, however, to shake off the dust of jurisprudence, which he never loved, and devote himself entirely to writing. He has written a play, several short stories, and a second novel which has just come out in Sweden. In the Scandinavian countries, his reputation as a humourist is an established one, but almost more than that, he is a faithful and colourful chronicler of the life, customs and people of his own part of Sweden—faithful to the spirit, and colourful in the letter.

The story in the present issue has been translated by Paula Wiking, who is also the translator of *Bombi Bitt*.

ORGILL MACKENZIE is a native of Galloway and a graduate of Edinburgh University. She is the wife of the Rev. Alister MacKenzie, Vice-master of Clayesmore School, Iwerne Minster, Dorset.

Her first book, *Poems and Stories*, appeared in 1930, and was followed by *The Crooked Laburnum*, a novel.

JESSAMINE HARRISON, who was born within sound of Bow Bells is London-Scottish. She is the daughter of a naval man, and the granddaughter of a famous Scottish artist. When she was twenty-one she had a short story published in the *English Review*, and has contributed to *Cornhill Magazine*. She has written poems and stories since she was very young. She loves travel, and her early life was spent following her father's ship. She hopes one day to go all over the world.

ARNDT GIUSTI was born in 1902, in Leipzig, and was sent to school in Buenos Aires. At an early age he began writing for newspapers in San Francisco. Later, he spent several years as a newspaper correspondent in Mexico and Central America. When he returned to Europe a few years ago, he lived in London, Paris, Berlin and Vienna. Arndt Giusti is at present writing for the movies in Hollywood.

WARRE BRADLEY WELLS, the translator of our serial *Quinette's Crime*—taken from the first English volume of Jules Romains's great serial novel, *Men of Good Will*—is known as author and journalist as well as translator. In this capacity he enjoys an established reputation as the translator, among other French authors, of Henri Barbusse, François Mauriac and Louis Bertrand—both of the Académie française—Professor Jean H. Mariéjol, of the University of Lyons, and Professor Bernard Fay, of the Collège de France. Mr. Wells has also translated several books from Spanish and Italian.